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**THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF PAUL'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE  
IN HIS HELLENISTIC ENVIRONMENT**

**A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**DEPARTMENT OF NEW TESTAMENT AND EARLY  
CHRISTIAN LITERATURE**

**BY  
HELEN SARAH STAFFORD**

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## CHAPTER I

### THE HELLENISTIC SOCIETY OF THE FIRST CENTURY

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That no man lives to himself alone is scarcely more true of

these years of the twentieth century than it was of the first. There

are, indeed, many points of contact between the two periods. Then,

as now, a universal brotherhood was preached; and then, as now, it

was not merely a pious saying, but a truth with the urge of facts be-

hind it. The boundaries of nations had then been borne down in a more

literal sense even than today; and it was constantly being brought home

to the people of that time that there were worlds of other beings from

whom they could not utterly separate themselves--men and women who, in

manners and speech, might often seem strangers to themselves, but whose

lives had, at bottom, the same needs and desires, the same hopes and

fears as their own. The isolation of the old days before the march of

Alexander the Great changed the face of the world was gone. Not only

nations, but communities, had then lived their lives to themselves and

men's ideas and knowledge revolved in small orbits. The embryo nation

of Rome on the Tiber, Greece with her self-sufficient city states, Judea

with her narrow nationalist hopes coming to pulse-quickening fulfillment

in one day--dashed down in failure the next--powerful and jealous nations

to the east--all were elements waiting fusion into the great empire that

was to be. The clash of the constant warfare of nations and tribes,

strong reaching out to grasp the weak, the weak writhing to free them-

selves from the grip of the strong, and all rearing defenses of racial



and national prejudices against each other--conditions such as these the first century did not know.

There is, however, a security in the comparative isolation of such a time that the larger world does not afford, a confidence born of the very ignorance of all the possibilities of misery and bliss which the great world outside contains. The little provincial community, to which all human beings beyond its narrowing walls are "foreigners", enjoys a certain immunity which it can never know again when those walls are torn down. Few peoples choose to go out of such comfortable seclusion, but are rather thrust out by the uncontrollable forces of an on-moving age. When this once happens, however, an inevitable change comes over the thinking of a people. There is, on the one hand, the larger vision, the greater sympathy and tolerance which must result, but this is only one side. When mountains are levelled and highways are built across the desert, and oceans are spanned, there may be pain for the eye in the vast distances. One can no longer put out confident hands and touch the encircling walls of tradition which may, to be sure, have shut in the vision, but at the same time gave assurance of safety. So it was in the days after the Greek and Roman conquests had resulted in bringing one world out of many. It is inevitable that in the new circumstances many of the old safeguards should cease to function, and new ones take their place. The old Greek city states had lived a family life. Religion, politics, and morality were one. But with the conquests of Alexander, the new age of universalism was ushered in, nations that had been remote from each other recognised their common citizenship in a world empire and a new thought era was born.

It is with this new world, characterised by the mingling of various



Races, nationalities, faiths, and ideals, that we are concerned-- the world in which Christianity had its way to win. Rome had risen supreme, and with her supremacy came blessings men had never before known. Peace, stability, prosperity, safety on land and sea, such ease of communication as the older world had not dreamed--no simple life, but as complex a civilization as the world has ever seen. Those arts which go to make for the physical comfort and enjoyment of mankind had reached a marvellous development. Yet it was far from being an age of calm contentment. Rome, in the days of Nero, knew luxury and grandeur, but she knew also the precarious hold on well-being that was inevitable under the tyranny of one of the worst of emperors. Greed for power and favor at any cost, lust for wealth, the recklessness and wantonness that comes from knowing that Fortune's wheel, which turns at the nod of a tyrant, may bring tomorrow the disaster that seems so far removed today; intrigue, scandal, plunging into idle pursuits to satisfy a fever for action, "rushing pell-mell to weddings of much married ladies, and the funerals of strangers", where less harmless pastimes were wanting. No wonder that many experienced an utter weariness of life and longed to leave it even though the beyond could hold no promise of better. No wonder that Seneca clung to a pessimistic theory of human history and regarded the virtuous age of mankind as in the remote past, nearer the source of primal purity.

To take such a picture, however, as characteristic of Hellenistic society is to get a distorted conception of the whole and is fatal to any correct estimate of that age. Unfortunately, it is this phase of society, the highly abnormal life of a certain class, that has



been most frequently presented to us, especially by those who desire to depict the Graeco-Roman world as a sink of iniquity in order that Christianity may stand out in all the more vivid contrast. Corruption enough there undoubtedly was, but if society had been as degenerate, as wholly unrelieved by any redeeming virtue as has sometimes been supposed, it would have fallen to pieces of its own rottenness. Even in Rome, there were those who struggled against being swallowed up by the vice and iniquity of the capital; and far away from the tyranny and turmoil of the palaces and the seats of the mighty, there were then, as there have always been, men and women living lives of honesty and industry, homes where family affection was true and friends were loyal to friends. A live age, intense and active, it was nevertheless no frivolous, superficial age, but rather one characterized by earnest seeking, and a great seriousness in the face of the problems of living.

This attitude is evidenced in the higher and lower classes of society alike. One of the most remarkable symptoms of the times is found in the development of philosophy. As is well known, the creative days of philosophy were past; the age of the keen, original thinkers of Greece at her intellectual prime had given way to those who were working over the heritage of the past and striving to make it serve the needs of the present. Yet it was not the barren, unproductive time that it is sometimes thought to be. There was need for those who could bring philosophy down out of the rarefied atmosphere of pure theory and speculation, and put it into such form that men might profit. It was, in other words, an intensely practical age, even in philosophy. And there were reasons why it should be so. There were challenges to men in those days of spiritual restlessness that brought into play the efforts of a Seneca



or an Epictetus to solve the pressing problems of daily existence.

The authority and sanctions of an older time in moral and spiritual life were removed; and new standards had to be erected in a society where many were asking if effort were at all worth while, if it were possible to moor themselves to anything stable in a world of change.

The old philosophies of speculation had resulted in so little that men felt confident about, so many contradictory theories and so little that was of real practical worth, that widespread scepticism had resulted. Earlier Stoicism had been too severe and cold, its conceptions too far removed from the ordinary affairs of life, to be satisfying in a time of genuine spiritual craving and desire for moral anchorage. Later Stoicism, therefore, dealt more with the ethical and religious; for not even philosophy, removed as it may seem from the usual course of life, is independent of the current of the times.

### The Common People

The early Christians did not move in the circles of the philosophers, and we must therefore turn to a glimpse of the world of the common people. "Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble among you are called," Paul said to his Corinthian converts. These were not people who fawned at the feet of emperors or intrigued with beautiful and unscrupulous women. They were men and women who worked. In the hope of the new era which Paul was opening up to them there were those, it seemed, who aspired to join the ranks of the idle, (1 Thess. 4") but Paul was quick to call them back to a world of reality. In that day when, to a



remarkable degree, the material things that minister to life were spread abroad, there was a high development of those arts and crafts which required skilled workmanship. The imperial court revelled in luxury, Rome imitated, and the cities and towns of the provinces were not slow to follow in their train. All that the East could offer to cater to the pampered appetites of the West poured seductively into Roman ports. Grocers and fruiterers tempted dainty appetites then as now, the plumber presented his bill even at that early date, stone cutters, carpenters, wine merchants, flask makers, dealers in purple, auctioneers, barbers, and tent makers proffered their services and their wares. A glimpse into the papyri dug out from the everyday life of those centuries,<sup>1</sup> obliterates many a year between now and then and brings us close to the very heart of people at the beginning of the Christian era. Men and women pleaded for love or sued for their rights, were grateful for benefits and complained about neglect, consulted their bankers, planted their fields, managed their homes. Simple folk, many of them, going their ways in honest pride of industry. Sorrow came into their homes as well as into the homes of the rich, and bitter tears and loneliness ensued, to be in the course of time forgotten. Joys came too, a new life in the home to be guarded, the merry-making at a wedding, preparations for the festival of a goddess, the excitement of a feast or a game. Even the slave, lowest down in the much graduated society of the day, had his human experiences as well as his master. Slavery<sup>2</sup> was one of the pillars of the economic and social structure, and the slaves met with weal or woe according to the caprices of the master. With all the degradation and suffering of the slave class, there was at the same time a

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<sup>1</sup>Oxyrhynchus and Hibeh Papyri

<sup>2</sup>Bill, Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius, Chapter III, Book I



growing feeling of responsibility toward them, and much kindness was shown. An ambitious slave had many opportunities for earning money with which he might eventually buy his freedom, and slaves were set free in large numbers by their masters. In this way, a large class of freedmen grew up which was no unimportant element in the life of the time.

Many a slave was superior to his master in culture, intellect, and natural ability, and frequently rose to positions of responsibility and prominence. Some of these freedmen were, of course, low and base, but many were honest, reputable citizens contributing beneficially to the society around them.

### Needs of the People

But we must go deeper still into the thought life of these masses of the people, an inner life which was determined by the political and social conditions of the time, and which in turn determined the demands they made on life. In a very real sense the world was too large, and in the mingling of races, customs, and ideas, men were exposed to a bewildering array of influences. The narrow civic and national life no longer ordered their conduct and thinking. There might be great gain in the fact that the old ideal of clan and family life had given way to the conception of a universal citizenship, but there was also for a time loss as well. The individual did not always find it easy to stand alone. The imperial power, far off, transcendent, fearful, and irresistible, bearing everything down under the sweep of its mighty arm, was a very different thing from the more intimate forms of government men had previously known. Standards of



life which had been determined by a place in a snug, well ordered scheme of existence were swept away, and a man was face to face with a world of problems and dangers, hopes and fears which threatened to be too much for him! Not only were all manner of wares of a cosmopolitan age being hawked abroad, but a motley supply of ideas and schemes of living were presented to men for their acceptance or rejection. The earth was theirs to choose from but it proved too large a market. If you did not go abroad peddling your own wares, as many did, responding to the lure of easy methods of communication and travel, and led on by the general desire for movement, the urge of a restless age, others were always ready to bring the world to your door.

#### Assemblies and Societies

In the face of the wider life into which men were thrust, there was manifested a strong tendency for people to group themselves into small organizations, frequently based on trades, but the object of which seemed to be not only the protection and advancement of the interests of the art or craft, but also a satisfaction of the demand for fellowship in a comparatively small circle.<sup>1</sup> Society over the empire, in imitation of Rome was organized on an aristocratic plan. The circles of wealth, birth, and office indubitably held highest rank, which the lower orders did not dispute; but the lower orders could and did seek their own satisfactions and an outlet for their energies in their own organizations.

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<sup>1</sup>Dill, Roman Society, Chapter III, Book II



The New Testament bears witness to these in the story in Acts 19 of the silversmiths' union which created so much trouble for the apostle Paul.

They do not cover before them. But a gloomier spirit is upon the men of the first century. The world is not their own as much as it is the property of a host of beings, good and bad, and men find

### A World of Fear

A dominant note in the thought and feeling of that century, and one which must be seriously and constantly taken into consideration if we are to understand the conditions of the Graeco-Roman world, was fear--a continual dread of the many forces that were conceived of as arbitrarily determining the destinies of men, even down to the small insignificant events of daily life which, after all, constitute the great tide in the affairs of men. Every unscientific age knows its fears in the face of the forces of the universe, its helplessness in the grip of what are regarded as the live, personal, capricious, and too often malevolent powers, that surround men on every side. In an animistic age, everything in the universe is endowed with life, feeling, will, purpose. Men feel themselves surrounded on every hand by mysterious influences with which they must learn to cope in order to avoid disaster. The physical environment goes far to determine the nature of these powers and the form men's fears shall take. In Babylon it was the stars that attracted attention, in Egypt the Nile, with other people peoples, the mountains or deserts. In the earlier days, before the world was opened, every nation had, as it were, its own domestic circle of powers to fear and placate, but now to these are added the hosts of powers of other peoples. If we go back to the earlier Greeks, or to the worshippers of the Vedic deities in India, we find a note of god-joyousness, of free,







binding of the strong man in his human abode. The great recommendation of Jesus to the Gentile world, as Mark presents it, is this very demon-expelling power.

The earlier Old Testament times did not know the crushing weight of this demonic rule, but the contact with Persian and Babylonian circles of thought in the time of the exile afforded this explanation of the phenomena of evil which they recognised as present in the world. So strong a hold did the idea take on Jewish thought that apocryphal literature is penetrated with it through and through. The origin of evil is carried back by some writers to those demons which were the spirits of the giant offspring of the luckless union between the "watcher" angels and the daughters of men.<sup>1</sup> The story of Tabit reveals the working of these spirits in all their glory. We have only to cross a period of years to the time of Justin to be impressed with the lasting hold these ideas had on men of all classes and grades of intellect through the centuries. It is in the Persian religion that we find the conception of the hierarchy of supernatural beings developed to its fullest extent and organized into a theology. From the beginning of things, two opposing kingdoms of good and evil have existed in the world, the hosts of good, under the leadership of Ahura Mazda, and those of evil under Ahriman. The great consummation at the end of the world will witness the triumph of the good, but in the meantime, the universe and the souls of men are the battleground of these fiercely contending powers.

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<sup>1</sup>Jubilees 5:1-4; 7:27



### Astrolatry and Astrology

In still another form appeared those influences which determined the destinies of men, limited their freedom, and bred apprehension in their minds--that of the heavenly bodies. It was from the East, and from Babylon in particular, that the West took over the belief in the control exercised by the planetary systems. When the old belief in certain forms of divination, such as the interpretation of flights of birds and the entrails of animals, ceased to influence the more intellectual, astrology came in and took a firm grip on all classes of people. Based as it was on the idea that the heavenly bodies were divinities, and yet containing an element of order and law and exactness of observation, it combined the elements of religion and science in such a way as to prove attractive to all minds. While some philosophers opposed it, the Stoics accepted it and taught submission to the decrees of the stars. These decrees which determined the destinies of mankind were fixed at birth and nothing could alter them. Men could only shape their course of action according to these heavenly fiat if by any means they could discover their will. For this reason, those were in demand who could read the signs of the heavens and reveal to men the decrees of the stars. The casting of horoscopes and the reading of dreams was the fashion of the hour. Whether it was a military campaign or a journey to the next town, the planets were consulted before it was undertaken. Statesmen and rulers as well as laborers and sailors, dwellers in city and country, had recourse to the reading of the heavens for the right ordering of their lives.

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<sup>1</sup> F. Cumont, Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism, p. 167

Will, Early Christianity, Book II, Chapter III



### Fear of Death

The fear that held men most in thrall in the first century was the fear of death. Ways might be devised of thwarting the evil spirits or even the inexorable stars, but death was inevitable and beyond it was a great unknown. More primitive people whose range of experience and knowledge is limited, whose wants are confined to a few material goods of life, concern themselves but little about the future. The Hebrews had only vague ideas of shadowy, unreal spirits flitting about in dim lands of shades. The early Greeks and Romans had visions of the river with its ghostly boatman. But as life developed, bringing larger contacts, wider knowledge, greater problems, questions about man's destiny and the government of the universe, a sadder spirit came upon men as they faced the future. Especially as the ideal of the individual as distinct from the group makes way, does this inquiry become insistent. As the moral idea grows, and the sense of justice becomes keener, thoughts about the future take shape accordingly, and men demand that the next life shall render compensation as this one fails to do. But in the first century, with all the longing that there was to escape from the vicissitudes of this life, there was but little promise of another for men to pin their hopes to. The inscriptions on the tomb stones tell a pathetic tale of hopelessness, of grief at a final separation. So great was the dread of extinction, of having one's name and memory pass into oblivion, that many men of wealth left provisions in their wills for a sum of money to be expended yearly for memorial feasts in their honor.<sup>1</sup> Everywhere we find evidence of the growing demand for

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<sup>1</sup>Dill, Roman Society, Book II, Chapter III



an assurance of immortality, and no religion could have made its way in the Hellenistic world that had not a confident answer to this question.

We have seen that the Hellenistic world was, because of the breaking down of city and national boundaries, and the influx into every phase of civilization of new ideas and problems, a prey to fears and uncertainties which it had not known before. And in proportion to the desire for the solution of man's problems, will be the adaptation and development of new religious and philosophical systems. This may be the result of a conscious and organized attempt; it is more likely to be, at first, the gradual, unconscious, interacting and development of different forces toward the desired end. The former is more likely to operate in the field of philosophy, the latter in the field of religion.

### Philosophy

That direction was philosophy taking in those days is clear to most the student of the time. The conditions no longer existed for a creative, speculative movement in that field. Instead, efforts were being made to build the older systems into something more in keeping with the changed circumstances and temper of the surrounding society. This is the history of the Hellenistic period, and it is the history of the decline of the ancient world.



## CHAPTER II

### SATISFACTIONS OF THE GRACCO-ROMAN WORLD

We have seen that the Gracco-Roman world was, because of the breaking down of city and national safeguards, and the influx into every phase of existence of new ideas and problems, a prey to fears and questionings which their fathers had not known. And in proportion to the desire for the solution of men's problems, will be the adaptation and development of existing vehicles of thought to meet this demand. This may be the result of a conscious and organized attempt; it is more likely to be, at first, the gradual, unconsidered interacting and development of different forces toward the desired end. The former is more likely to operate in the field of philosophy, the latter in the field of religion.

#### Philosophy

What direction was philosophy taking in these days in order to meet the demand of the times? The conditions no longer existed for a creative, speculative movement in that field. Instead, efforts were being made to build the older systems into something more in keeping with the changed circumstances and temper of the surrounding society. This explains the intensely practical, moral, and even religious trend at this time.



The most widespread and influential of the philosophies in the first century was Stoicism. As founded by Zeno in the third century, B.C., its cosmic theory postulated a divine, fiery, substance as the basis of all created things. In this divine fire, which has conscious will and purpose, is the creative impulse, and from it is evolved the universe of matter and of sentient being. The difference between "dead" matter and spirit was conceived of not as a question of kind, entirely, but of degree, since this primal, ethereal substance is present in all matter, but in slighter degree in the grosser forms. It is present in greater fulness as we go up the scale, until we reach the human soul which is an emanation of the divine substance itself, veritably a part of God. This monistic conception underlying Stoicism differentiates it sharply from Platonism in which the dualistic idea of matter and spirit is dominant. Thus Stoicism denies an impassable gulf between soul and body since both share, though in differing degrees, in the divine element. It excludes that warfare between the things of the sense and those of the spirit, and with it, the conception which incarcerates the spirit in the body as in an alien and hostile element, and leads to the ascetic ideal of life as the means of releasing the soul from its burden of flesh and allowing it to escape to its home in God. The soul, according to Stoic doctrine, is immortal, but the individual is not. The soul is finally reabsorbed into the divine essence from which it came, but the person perishes. The Stoic idea of harmony inherent in the universe and in the constitution of man is carried over into the moral sphere and becomes the basis of a standard of life according to nature--"nature" being by no means the "simple life" of modern aspirations, but the seed



popular teaching, have we not a historical conception of the purposes of development, of divine implanting, which when allowed full control and method of philosophy in this way? Were men seeking truth the least rightly directs the life of man. It is, in other words, the God nature bestowed they sought to take it away and in a quest for standards of life active in man, and as man lives in harmony with it, his whole life evolves consistently with God's purpose for him. It is, therefore, natural to guide men's thinking in a direction, conditioning age long standards of conduct to adhere to the good and reject the evil. Sin is the suppression of this inner guide. As the logos power rules in the universe, so it should rule in man. With Zeno, the question of how to live was a very real one. He built on a strongly individualistic basis, and maintained that the world is real and the senses trustworthy in giving information about it. He led the way toward monotheism by emphasizing the unity and harmony of the universe and built up a system of thought which for many centuries was the leading philosophy in the world.

In mortal effort, intellect, or skill,  
Defeating ill; but how the sweeter will,  
He struggle onward, ignorant and blind,  
For a result unknown and undefined.

#### Latter Development in Philosophy

In the first century, however, there was manifest a different temper in philosophy. The minds of the intellectual leaders were no longer moving in the purely creative realm of thought. There was lacking the vigor and power that characterized the genius of earlier centuries. And judging from this point of view, philosophy was exhausted. But is it to be charged with justice that philosophy was essentially degenerate? When it is said that the spirit of struggle for human perfection was lacking in Hellenism--that not truth, but happiness, was the aim, that the Stoics made terms with the popular polytheism against higher conceptions of God, that we have, in short, a philosophy that prostituted its high ends to cater to a debased



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#### Later Development in Philosophy

In the first century, however, there was manifest a different temper in philosophy. The minds of the intellectual leaders were no longer moving in the purely creative realm of thought. There was lacking the vigor and power that characterized the genius of earlier centuries. And judging from this point of view, philosophy was exhausted. But is it to be charged with justice that philosophy was essentially degenerate? When it is said that the spirit of struggle for human perfection was lacking in Hellenism--that not truth, but happiness, was the aim, that the Stoics made terms with the popular polytheism against higher conceptions of God, that we have, in short, a philosophy that prostituted its high ends to cater to a debased



popular craving, have we not a distorted conception of the purposes and methods of philosophy in this era? Were men seeking truth the less because they sought to make it serve men in a quest for standards of living? Were they seeking happiness alone merely because they attempted to guide men's thinking in a restless, questioning age into channels of confidence and peace? Were they catering to popular demands simply because they were sensitive to the social conditions in which they lived and tried to give some relief in the midst of pressing problems? They recognized the claim on philosophy to supply a sure guide for conduct. Men had grown weary of futile speculations resulting only in conflicting human opinions, and cried out for certainties in a world that seemed to be the prey of arbitrary supernatural powers. The following lines are suggestive:

"Kynnae, believe me, Fortune, good nor ill  
No mortal effort, intellect, or skill,  
Determine it; but heav'n's superior will.  
We struggle onward, ignorant and blind,  
For a result unknown and undefined,  
Avoiding seeming ills misunderstood,  
Embracing seeming evils as a good.  
In our own plans unable to detect  
Their final unavoidable defect.  
Tormented with unsatisfied desire,  
The fortunate to farther aims aspire,  
Beyond the bounds of mortal happiness.  
Restless and wretched in their own success  
We live like children and the almighty plan,  
Controls the froward children of weak man."

It is not entirely to the discredit of philosophy if it joined hands with religion in an effort to satisfy a society which revolted against the abstractions of pure philosophy and demanded those things which religion affords. If it had at hand only the crude myths, relics of an earlier time, and the superstition and passion-infested beliefs of the East, it at least

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<sup>1</sup>Theognis, Quoted from Mahaffy, Social Life in Greece, p. 375  
with reason as his guide, fortify himself in his own soul against the



sought to purify them and put them on a reasoned basis. The past takes a tyrannical grip on the minds of men and they feel an instinct to link the authority of the past to the present in order to reinforce the latter's claims. Philosophy did its best to transmute the dross of the past into a finer element and make it serve men's needs of a later generation.

It is to the credit of Stoicism that it had the power to adapt itself to a changing age with its imperious demands. Panaetius, in the second century, B. C. felt the need of making Stoicism a greater functioning factor in its environment. He introduced the Platonic idea of the dualism of body and soul, thus giving entrance to the mystical idea. Cicero, who was Stoic in his ethics, conceived the aim of philosophy to be to reveal the nature of good and evil and to serve as a guide in the realization of the good. His own contribution was to make Greek philosophers accessible to Roman youth by translating them into Latin. We cannot pass without mention two representatives of later Stoicism who as contemporaneous with the rise of the Christian religion, have been felt to have so much in common with Christian ideals that many have labored hard to establish a direct dependence. Seneca lived in the thick of the corruptions of Nero's court and did not escape its contaminations. Yet he gave an interpretation of philosophy with a deep spiritual and strong ethical tone that is most striking. God is for him not a cosmic force only, but a moral Being close to man. A holy spirit dwells within them. Man came from God and there is that in them that reaches out to him. He adopts the Platonic theory of the dualism of body and soul. Surrounded as he was by vice and crime, he could not evade the fact of sin and he makes the knowledge of sin a safeguard against it. Man must free himself from the tyranny of evil desires, and with reason as his guide, fortify himself in his own soul against the



passions of the body. He preached the brotherhood of men, duties to others, and the necessity of love and forgiveness.

Epictetus stressed the place of the will in the moral life. Man's will is free, and he can realize the will of nature in his own life, thus creating his own world in which he is beyond the reach of external evils, pain, or loss. Virtue and happiness are within a man's own power and it is his duty to attain the good. It is the appearance of things that leads man astray and if he will only grasp reality, i.e., real values, he will be free. It is not things, but the opinion about things, not death, but the fear of death, that troubles mankind. No one who fears or grieves is free. "When you go to a sear, go not with fear, but knowing that all things are indifferent. Whatever it may be, it shall lie with thee to use it nobly and this can no man prevent." Yet a man is not to be indifferent to another's needs, but render him any service within his power. In religion, he taught that men's souls are fragments of God, and that every act is known by him. God cares for men and hears their prayers. It is man's duty to learn what God is and to strive to be like him.

Among the philosophical movements of this period, must also be mentioned the revival of the teaching of Pythagoras, who, among early Greek philosophers, came largely under the influence of the East. The idea of the conflict of body and soul and the desire to free the soul from its earthly bondage resulted in a rigorous asceticism and a mystical ecstasy. In Neo Pythagoreanism the religious consciousness of the East is blended with the intellectual emphasis of the West. It is a part of the great religio-philosophical movement of Hellenism.



The first century, like every other age, had those who delighted in making a plaything out of the serious concerns of life and there were those to whom moral philosophy was a fad of the hour. Philosophy also had its street peddlers who proclaimed the merits of virtue and knowledge to curious and idle passers by, "intellectual acrobats", vendors of fine phrases, who loved to roll sweet morsels of rhetoric under their tongues. In fact, every department of art and culture had to be decked out in gorgeous raiment of rhetoric to make it acceptable to the public eye. Yet while the cities abounded in those whose sole concern was love of display and personal gain, who gave hungry men sugar-coated wisps of straw for bread, there were also traveling preachers who seriously attempted to reach the populace with the best that philosophy had to give. Well as the intellect, a vast range of mingled emotions of which the man himself is not aware. In short, like the superior man of Confucius, the wise man of the Stoics represented the much the unsatisfactory for the mass **Summary** age in which he lived.

In such ways did earnest and sincere men attempt to grapple with the problems before them. And to many they did succeed in bringing calm in a time of turmoil. Yet, though Stoic vocabulary might be common language, and Stoic ideas common property, to a fear-ridden and demon-haunted world they could not bring assurance and hope. Philosophy was (1) too introspective. The wise man might take counsel of the divine within him and secure respite from fear and grief by discriminating between the appearances and the realities of life, but the common man could take refuge in no such intellectual subtleties. The forces that determined the welfare of men were conceived of as external and personal. Their enemies were objective, and their deliverers must be as well. (2) It was too abstract and cold. Even though the Stoic which could take the place of the old national worship which had gone down in the general debacle. It had therefore a very real place in the life of



talked of the divine fatherhood, and of sonship and brotherhood, fundamentally the idea of God was pantheistic, and lacked the warmth and definiteness that was needed. (3) It gave no sufficient motivation to the moral life. Goodness for its own sake with never a hope of reward and with the teaching that the good act itself was of no ultimate value, was not a moral dynamic for the man of the workshop and the fields. (4) It was too intellectual. With all the elements of religion that were introduced into philosophy, it remained too austere. The emotional life was too largely ignored, and existence centred too much in the conscious and logical processes. Leaders of thought had not learned that man reacts to a situation with the whole of his being, and not merely with one phase of it. And that whole includes, as well as the intellect, a vast range of mingled emotions of which the man himself is not aware. In short, like the superior man of Confucius, the wise man of the Stoic represented too much the unattainable for the masses of the age in which he lived.

#### EMPEROR WORSHIP

The combination of religion and science which astrology presented took a firm grip on all classes. Emperor Worship was the result. The Hellenistic period, that of deity coming down to dwell in the form of the earthly ruler, was foreign to the early Greeks and Romans. Great men were models for the gods and not the reverse. We have here another element in the oriental invasion of the occident; for it had long been a custom among the eastern people, who abased themselves before the gods, to see in the mighty ruler, far removed from his humble subjects, the god incarnate. Such a practice could find a hold throughout the empire because there was needed something which could take the place of the old national worship which had gone down in the general débacle. It had therefore a very real place in the life of



But only was astrology resorted to as a means of discovering the time. But it filled only a very limited place in the demands of courses of fate, but magic was called upon in the hope of changing the people. The power of the great ruler might bestow prosperity and the course of events. The field of magic was a large one in the national political well being, but he could not deliver from the unseen terrors world. The magicians were men who, whatever may have been the abuses of the universe. Only the god of the truly supernatural world could their power, save seriously endeavoring to help and ward the evils of life function here. While certain group desires might find satisfaction in and escape the malignant influences of the supernatural world. If they such a creed, it could not affect profoundly the deep tide of individual believed others, they were themselves deluded. All varieties of men were craving for a savior-god which flowed so strongly in the Hellenistic world. Moreover, fortune under the emperors was too fickle. While the laws the secret of control and force was in their will. Spells, incantations, rule of an Augustus might raise man's hopes of an earthly salvation, a nations, magic rites and formulas by the thousands testify to the demand. Here would speedily crush them. So, while a certain sitting was formed for such weapons of offense and defense. If an evil spirit threatened, a for Christ as a great benefactor, this phase of his appeal to humanity was powerful spirit must be persuaded or constrained to exercise his power. was not equal to that of his naming as a divine savior.

In particular, if one could only learn the secret name of a spirit, he might force him into his service, or he might put himself under his protection, possess his property, and live a charmed life, free from the influences of hostile powers. The name is an objective power which demands and respects.

### **astrology and magic**

The combination of religion and science which astrology presented took a firm grip on all classes of people; and the belief in fate--the destiny-determining power of the planets--was one of the tyrannical powers from which men sought deliverance. To the philosopher, the decree of the stars was inexorable; and since there was no appeal from it, he attempted only to learn what was in store for him and then, like the true wise man, resigned himself to the inevitable. But to the common man the ordered movements of the heavenly bodies represented not so much the law and order of the universe, as the old heroes of mythology elevated to the place of deities of the sky; and they cherished the hope that there might be some way of persuading or circumventing them.



Not only was astrology resorted to as a means of discovering the decrees of fate, but magic was called into play in the hope of changing the course of events. The field of magic was a large one in the ancient world. The magicians were men who, whatever may have been the abuses of their power, were seriously endeavoring to help men avoid the evils of life and escape the malignant influences of the supernatural world. If they deluded others, they were themselves deluded. All varieties of means were resorted to to secure a hold on the inhabitants of the spirit world, to learn the secret of control and force them to their will. Spells, incantations, magic rites and formulas by the thousands testify to the demand for such weapons of offense and defense. If an evil spirit threatened, a more powerful spirit must be persuaded or constrained to exercise his power. In particular, if one could only learn the secret name of a spirit, he might force him into his service, or he might put himself under his protection, become his property, and live a charmed life, free from the influences of hostile powers. The Name<sup>1</sup> is an objective power which demons must respect. The written as well as the spoken name is efficacious and so is found on numberless amulets and charms and even on men's bodies. The spoken name compels the possessor to listen to the prayer of one in need. So Moses demands the name of the deity who will send him into Egypt, Ex. 3<sup>13</sup>. The blessing or curse of Balaam pronounced in Jahveh's name is vital. Num. 23. A person was able by bringing a powerful demon into his service, to influence another person for good or ill. Love could be coerced and hate punished and revenge won. No small wonder that people of that time, feeling themselves a prey not only to the capricious wills of demons, but of men,

<sup>1</sup>W. Heitmüller, In Namen Jems  
find the gods of the new country with their own.<sup>1</sup> Thus little demons

<sup>2</sup>W. Heitmüller, Oriental Religion in Roman Palestine, p. 40



longed by some means to lift themselves out of the realm of such hostile beings and win security and peace under the constant protection of more powerful and beneficent lords.

1. That the whole universe was endowed with life; and that man felt their own lives to be closely bound by subtle, invisible ties to the life of nature about them. Only thus to the gods, wild, and often revolting.

**The Mystery Religions** and Cybele were worshipped

among the Greeks. In a system of mountains, forests, and waterfalls,

No one factor of life in the ancient world brought greater satisfaction in this situation than the mystery religions. These cults of primarily eastern origin had taken the western world by storm and in the first century were found in almost all the countries of the Roman empire. The invasion of the western world by these cults had begun as early as the seventh and sixth centuries B. C. and their influence had been steadily growing,

until at the beginning of our era, we find them dominating the religious life of the Mediterranean world. The scepticism and scorn of the more intellectual and the changing conditions of social life had broken down the power of the old Greek and Roman pantheon, and only a shadow of their former brilliant rule now survived in certain public forms of worship. But the spirit of the Hellenistic society was indomitably religious, and it was the mystery religions that supplied the need. We shall consider the main cults among these in order to determine the secret of their drawing power.

The Orphic cult was related to that of Dionysus and was probably intended as a refinement of it.<sup>1</sup> It represents an attempt to graft on to **Dionysus and Orpheus** a religion the philosophical interests in the theory of the universe and man's

The first of the invading deities was Dionysus, the Thracian god. When the Phrygians came from Thrace among the Anatolian races, they identified the gods of the new country with their own.<sup>1</sup> Thus Attis became

<sup>1</sup> Cumont, Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism, p. 48



Dionysus-Sabagios the god of vegetation. It must constantly be borne in mind in the consideration of early religions that the supernatural world impinged closely on the natural, that the whole universe was endowed with life, and that men felt their own lives to be closely bound by subtle, invisible ties to the life of nature about them. Only thus do the crude, wild, and often revolting rites by which Dionysus and Cybele were worshipped become intelligible. In a country of mountains, torrents, and waterfalls, of quickly springing and dying vegetation where nature herself seemed excited, intoxicated, and capricious, it was not strange that the devotees in imitation of their gods plunged into all excesses and extremes of emotion. As Cybele, goddess of earth, mourned the death of her lover, or rejoiced in his restoration, her followers also experienced paroxysms of grief and raptures of joy.

In the Dionysus cult, the god was conceived of as being incorporated into the sacrificial animal, and the living flesh of this animal was torn and devoured in order that the devotees might thus receive the god himself. The female worshippers, in wild bacchanalian revels, worked themselves up into such a state of ecstasy that they believed themselves to be set free from the body of flesh and united with the god. Riotous music, nocturnal dances, songs and fasts, all contributed their powerful part to this emotional dissipation.

The Orphic cult was related to that of Dionysus, and was probably intended as a reformation of it.<sup>1</sup> It represents an attempt to graft on to a religion the philosophical interests in the theory of the universe and man's nature, origin, and destiny.<sup>2</sup> The idea of immortality is found in

<sup>1</sup> Laisy, Les Mystères Païens, Chapter II. Different myth. This was the god of vegetation, and the animals in his honor commemorated his death in the

<sup>2</sup> C. Toussaint, L'Hellénisme, p. 69



the legend of Dionysus, who, in the form of a bull was pursued and captured by the Titans and devoured. Athena rescued his heart and gave it to Zeus who swallowed it and gave birth to a new Dionysus. In his wrath he struck the Titans with his thunderbolt and from their ashes men were born. Because of the seed of the Titans in them they are sinful, but they have also a spark of the divine life through the god whom the Titans had devoured. It is this spark of divinity which the Orphic cult undertakes to liberate from its body tomb by means of asceticism and purificatory rites. Death could not free the soul since, in the natural order of things, it only passes on into other forms of life. Only the god can free it, so Dionysus becomes a savior god. For those who escaped the dreary round of transmigration a judgment and immortal life were in store.

There were festivals every two years to celebrate the death and resurrection of Dionysus. The god appears in the form of a bull and the devotees see in him the god pursued by the Titans. But suddenly he revives and in the joy that follows the mourning, the worshippers feel themselves to have shared the experiences of the god. Free play was afforded to the emotions in the demonstrations that accompanied this celebration--wild cries, delirium, hypnotic states, and illusions. The description of the underworld in the Orphic books makes it possible to suppose that certain scenes were given representing Hades--based on the experience of Orpheus himself.

The mythic tale this cult would no doubt be profoundly affected by the great procession as he watched the goddess come in her car, but he could be stirred most deeply by Orpheus and Attis, he heard the story of

The grief-stricken goddess seeking her lover and saw the bloody funeral

In the Phrygian cult of Cybele and Attis we find the same general traits predominating under the guise of a different myth. Attis was the god of vegetation, and the festivals in his honor commemorated his death in the



fall and his resurrection in the spring. According to one story, he was killed by a bear at the instigation of Jupiter; according to another, he was fleeing from Cybele and mutilated himself under a pine tree into which he was metamorphosed and which became from that time a symbol sacred to him. It is over the pine tree that Cybele mourns and weeps for her lover, and likewise over a pine tree, brought for the ceremony and decked out as a corpse, that the worshippers yield to a frenzy of sympathetic grief, beating and cutting themselves. The priests and initiates sometimes in the excitement of the moment mutilated themselves, thus participating in the experience of the god and thereby receiving his spirit. In the morning, the resurrection of the god is announced and grief gives way to rejoicing, expressed in feasts, masquerades, and processions. The password of the initiate was, "I have eaten from the tambourine, I have drunk from the cymbal," this eating and drinking signifying communion with the living Attis. The rite of the taurobolium distinguishes this cult from others. For this ceremony a pit is dug and a grating placed over it. A bull, representing the god, is then killed over the pit and his blood pouring down drenches the initiate in the pit beneath. When he emerges from this blood baptism, he is greeted as a god, as Attis himself, for has he not received the very life and spirit of the god by his baptism in the blood of the victim? Attis now lives in him. He is regenerated, is, in fact, a new man.

The initiate into this cult would no doubt be profoundly affected by the great procession as he watched the goddess borne in her car, but he would be stirred most deeply when, in the temple, he heard the story of the grief-stricken goddess seeking her lover and saw the bloody funeral rites. These barbarous rites underwent a refining process later on under Greek influence but the underlying ideas remained the same.



### Eleusinian Mysteries

In connection with these mysteries, there were two annual celebrations, the lesser mysteries in March and the greater mysteries in October, the former celebrating the return of Persephone from the underworld to which she had been carried away by Pluto to the sorrow of her mother Demeter. A spectacular public procession took place in which the sacred images were brought from Eleusis to Athens. Later, they were carried back to Eleusis with dances, songs, sacrifices, and secret rites on the way. In the first degree of initiation the candidate witnessed the scenes in the life of Dionysus, later on, in the great mysteries at Eleusis, the drama of Demeter was graphically portrayed--the intense grief of the mother at the loss of her daughter, and later her joy at her recovery. In regard to this Plutarch says: "The soul at the moment of death undergoes the same impression as the initiate into the great mysteries. A march full of terror, in which initiates were led across labyrinths, hearing strange and terrible sounds--a vivid portrayal of the underworld that the initiates might share in the sorrow of the goddess mother. Then, as her joy succeeds her sorrow, so the pain of the initiate is transformed into delight, as, no longer in the terrors of death, but in places of dazzling light and ecstasy, he beholds the gods and listens to their voices." Here they look upon the sacred objects and have imparted to them the sacred formulas and passwords. While in this mystery we do not find the eating of the sacred animal which imparts immortality through the communication of the divine nature, the assurance of immortality is given through the sights and mystic experiences in the rites of Demeter. A mystical union with the goddess, a dramatic marriage was also symbolized by the partaking of the *kykeon*, and is doubtless a true picture of the service of the goddess late in the first century.



sanctified food and drink. The hymn to Demeter well expresses the faith of the initiate. "Happy the man living on the earth who has seen these things. But he who has not been initiated into the secret ceremonies and he who has had part in them never have after death the same destiny in the vast land of shadows."<sup>1</sup>

... robes. Then one bearing in his bosom the awful image of the mighty deity, the emblem of whose meaning we can only speak, for it is a symbol of the ineffable of faith.

**Isis and Osiris (Serapis)**

Before the initiation, to which he had long been devoted, he had visions. It was the clever political idea of Ptolemy Soter to introduce into Alexandria a hellenized Egyptian religion which on account of its literary and artistic elements would prove acceptable to Greeks and would at the same time perpetuate the old Egyptian beliefs.<sup>2</sup> Thus in Serapis, god of the dead, the Egyptians recognized their own Osiris, god of vegetation, and the Greeks were ready to adopt a worship purified of the barbarous elements attaching to other oriental cults. Again we recognise the old nature myth, the dying and rising god, with Isis now instead of Cybele, mourning her husband and sorrowfully seeking his dismembered body along the Nile; and the weeping turned to joy at the final success of the quest. Again the worshippers feel themselves torn by grief and raised into ecstasies of rapture with the changing experiences of the goddess. Again the god, raised to immortality after the vicissitudes of his life on earth, promises a share in the blessed life to those who worship him.

Apuleius<sup>3</sup> gives us a most vivid description of the relations of the

<sup>1</sup> Lalay, *Les Mystères Païens*, p. 77

<sup>2</sup> F. Cumont, *Oriental Religions*, p. 75

<sup>3</sup> While the account by Apuleius of the experiences of Lucius belongs to the second century A.D., it is in keeping with earlier accounts, e.g., that of Plutarch, and is doubtless a true picture of the service of the goddess Isis in the first century.



initiate to the goddess and of the initiatory rites. Isis appears to him in a vision<sup>1</sup> promising to release him from the hideous ass' shape into which malignant fate had transformed him, but warning him that his life now belongs to her. He is a spectator of the gorgeous procession,<sup>2</sup> beautiful women, music, lights, priests, and initiates in their white robes. Then one bearing in his bosom the "awful image of the mighty deity, the emblem of whose meaning no man may speak, for it is a symbol of the loftiest of faiths whose mysteries must be shrouded in deep silence." Before the initiation, to which he had long been destined, he had visions of the goddess at night and was compelled to observe the requirements of chastity and abstinence. The act of dedication was regarded as a voluntary imperilling of life. But he has his reward, for whom the goddess calls, she brings to new birth, and places once more at the beginning of a new race of life.

Summus of his experiences on earth he sympathizes with men in their struggles and after his vision is accomplished he ascends to heaven and watches over mortals. Mithra's experience differs from that of the other hero gods in that, Mithra is not of light, he does not

actually suffer death. For this reason, and because there is no female divinity associated with him, there are wanting the attributes of masculine Christ in the struggle to conquer the Graeco-Roman world; all the more formidable because in so many respects, his cult bears remarkable resemblances to Christianity and for that reason, seemed to the Christian fathers to have been the special instrument of the demons who opposed Christianity.<sup>3</sup> Mithra differed from the other deities of which we have spoken in that he

<sup>1</sup>Metamorphoses, Chapter III

<sup>2</sup>Metamorphoses, Chapter VIII-X

<sup>3</sup>See e.g. Justin Martyr



was an astral deity and not a god of vegetation. Closely related to the worship of the sun, the cult was free from many of the grosser conceptions which characterized the worship of the gods of the soil--of the fertility of vegetable and animal life. Mithra, like the other hero gods of the mystery religions, was not the chief god, but occupied a position between Mazda, or Ormuzd, and Ahriman, the god of the powers of darkness. He is the beneficent god, watching over the affairs of men, their patron and guardian, the bringer of good. The Mithraic myth centres around the capture and slaying of the wild bull, in which are depicted the struggles and sufferings of the hero god on earth as well as his services to mankind. The monuments<sup>1</sup> represent him in the act of slaying the bull by plunging a knife into its body while from the wound come forth herbs and plants for the benefit of mankind. Mithra thus becomes the creator of all useful things. Because of his experiences on earth he sympathizes with men in their struggles; and after his mission is accomplished he ascends to heaven and watches over mortals. Mithra's experience differs from that of the other hero gods in that, since he is god of light, he does not actually suffer death. For this reason, and because there is no female divinity associated with him, there are wanting the extremes of emotionalism which are characteristic of the other cults of the dying and rising savior gods. Yet this element is not entirely lacking. The cave ceremonies of initiation must have been profoundly moving with the brilliant lights, the sacred images, and the thrilling tale of the earthly trials of the god.

Mithraism was a more highly developed system than any other, having a cosmic theory, a theology, and an elaborate eschatological idea in which

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<sup>1</sup> F. Cumont, Textes relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra



the ethical element was strong, as, in fact, it was in the whole cult. An ethical dualism distinguishes Mithraism, a struggle between the powers of good and evil. Mankind is in the midst of this struggle, but it will not last forever, and in the end good will triumph. At the consummation of the age comes the resurrection and the judgment followed by the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous.

On the cultic side, we find the seven degrees of initiation in which the mystic receives the names of raven, occult, soldier, lion, Persian, runner of the Sun, and Father. A supper was observed by the initiates in commemoration of the banquet of Mithra with the Sun before his ascent to heaven after his labors on earth were over. Besides purificatory washings, the taurobolium was practised in Mithraism in which as in the Cybele worship, the initiate received the spirit of the god himself.

### Syrian Cults

In the worship of the Babylonian Ishtar and his associate Tammuz, and in Astarte and Adonis of Syria, are found the same elements of the mourning of the goddess in which her worshipers share, and the god's eventual restoration to life with the accompanying rejoicing--the same basis of nature myth as in the cults farther west.

### Common Traits of the Mystery Religions

This brief sketch of the dominant mystery religions has been intended to reveal the main ideas underlying them. They are found to



possess certain fundamental conceptions in common, even though the means of expression in myth and ritual may differ. These are (1) the myth of the dying and rising savior-god--a myth originating in the sense of men's dependence on and union with the world of nature; (2) a religion constructed on this myth giving promise of release from the evils of this present life and the perpetuation of the soul life in a world after death, won through the participation in the experiences of the here god; (3) a satisfaction for the emotional life through dramatic and pictorial presentations of the experience of the gods in which the worshiper participates; (4) a cult by means of which salvation is effected and <sup>un</sup>communion with the deity realized.

These are redemptive religions with an individual appeal, developing from the cruder forms of an earlier time to more refined forms as society demands, but with an underlying element which remains constant. These characteristics are most significant of the demands of Hellenistic society. A religion develops to satisfy the needs of society as they arise out of changing social conditions. To illustrate this fact, we may take the two conceptions of immortality and an ethical conception, neither of which is found in more primitive forms of religion. But as the individual ideal develops, as distinguished from the group and as social conditions arise which cause men's ultimate satisfactions to be projected from the present into the future, religion must provide the assurance men crave. So also as men's relations with each other reveal the necessity for moral standards, religion formulates motives and sanctions for these. The society of the first century spoke with no uncertain voice on the subject of religion, and no new religion could hope to win its way if it failed to heed that voice.



the universe, and there was often, as in the case of astrology, or the developed theological and ethical system of Mithraism, a sufficiently large element of the scientific or intellectual to give to the cruder phases of religion an appearance of the rational, along with the charm of the mystical.

The common people were by no means indifferent to the fact that the mysteries, along with gorgeous and spectacular public displays, and a most imposing ritual, offered an esoteric faith to the chosen few--a most seductive charm. Finally, no inconsiderable satisfaction was found for the social instincts in the societies and brotherhoods of believers where rich and poor, high and low, mingled on a democratic basis.

By the first half of the first century, the cults of Dionysus, of Cybele and Attis, of Isis and Osiris, had for some time had a firm hold on the western countries of the Roman empire. The irresistible appeal to the people is evident in the fact that, in spite of the most vigorous resistance on the part of the authorities and repeated persecutions, the cults of Cybele and Isis became firmly established in Italy itself. Mithraism was the last of the oriental faiths to find its way into the west. But there are traces of it in Italy from the time of Pompey in 60 B. C.<sup>1</sup> and it had for some time previously been influential in lands farther east.

#### Prevalence and Significance of Syncretism

The Syncretistic tendency of the age is of the utmost significance for one who is seeking to understand its varied currents, and in particular

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<sup>1</sup> F. Cumont, Textes relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra, p. 244



Spread of the Mystery Religions<sup>1</sup>

In the first century the mystery religions were penetrating every corner of the Roman empire in the process which was to reach its culmination in the two centuries following. In the first place, purely physical conditions favored this movement. In the general mixing of the peoples consequent on the Greek and Roman conquests, great tides of human life were carriers of customs and ideas between peoples formerly far separated. Colonies planted by the conquering nations were centres from which their peculiar ideas radiated. Slaves captured and sold in large numbers were instrumental in bringing religious notions into the very homes of the conquerors. Merchants introduced the more subtle influences of life along with their substantial wares. Soldiers and sailors, always, because of the peculiar dangers of their occupations, peculiarly devoted to protective powers, carried their deities to remotest points. Religious ideas formed only one element of the cultural possessions long accumulating, which the orient was pouring into the occident. But in this realm, the mystical, emotional, supernatural appeal was overwhelming for nations who had developed the practical and rationalistic to a high degree, but who had found them insufficient in this complex age, which was presenting new aspects of the problems of the universe, the origin and destiny of man, and the relation of earth to heaven. The grip on the masses of people was inevitable; but the more intellectual did not escape the lure of the ideas of the east because they, too, were feeling the pull of the unseen forces of

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<sup>1</sup>See in particular, F. Cumont, Oriental Religions, pp. 20-45



the universe, and there was often, as in the case of astrology, or the developed theological and ethical system of Mithraism, a sufficiently large element of the scientific or intellectual to give to the cruder phases of religion an appearance of the rational, along with the charm of the mystical.

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<sup>1</sup> F. Cumont, Textes relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra, p. 244

F. Cumont, Christianisme païen, p. 244  
S. Hall, Early Christianity, p. 135



the conditions which made possible the rise of the Christian religion. Long before the Christian era, we find in the orient the beginnings of this process which was later to embrace in a vast movement toward fusion the various phases of Hellenistic culture--art, philosophy, religion, science. ~~Long before the Christian era, we find in the orient the beginnings of this process which was later to embrace in a vast movement toward fusion the various phases of Hellenistic culture--art, philosophy, religion, science.~~ At the stage of Greek philosophy represented by Aristotle, it stands at the height of pure philosophical attainment. But before that, Orphism, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, and even Plato represent the interaction, in varying degrees, of the philosophic spirit and the tendency toward oriental mysticism. And again, after Aristotle, there is an increasing tendency toward eclecticism in the field of philosophy as well as a leaning toward a combination of philosophy, ethics, and religion. Pure reason gains a human warmth by an alliance with faith. Waning religious systems or crude mythological conceptions clothe themselves in intellectual garb in order to win a wider hearing in higher circles.

In religion, the syncretistic tendency is especially active. In the orient, circumstances were particularly favorable. Unlike the Greek gods, with their sharply defined personalities, oriental deities tended to blend into each other as various aspects of one supreme deity. Under the influence of Babylon, gods of vegetation were raised to solar rank with certain modifications in their character. Primitive Persian beliefs were blended with Semitic ideas in Mithraism.<sup>1</sup> Mazda was identified with Bel and Mithra with Shamash, the Sun god. Zeus and Mazda united and Mithra donned the cap of Phrygian Attis. As Mithraism spread, this process continued until we have the "greatest effort of syncretism to absorb without extinguishing, the gods of the classic pantheon in a cult which was almost monotheistic".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>F. Cumont, Oriental Religions, p. 146

<sup>2</sup>S. Dill, Roman Society, p. 585



Isis goes out from her native home in Egypt and draws to her shrine the worshipers of Demeter and Cybele. The votary of Serapis discovers that under the names of Jupiter, Osiris, Adonis, Attis, and Mithra, his own god is being supplicated and he realizes that these other gods grant release from the same ills of life and the same assurance of a blessed hereafter that he demands from his own. A striking example of this movement of assimilation is found in the Isis worship. In the invocation to Isis<sup>1</sup> she is represented as a combination of divine, human, and animal elements. She is addressed as all powerful, queen, ruler, almighty, warrior goddess, savior, goddess of seas and rivers, protectress of sailors and travelers, of women in childbirth, goddess of truth, love, and immortality. At Delta, giver of favors; at Apis, understanding; at Rome, warlike; at Pnecstis, pilot; at Delphi, best and fairest; at Samos, sacred; in Italy, love of the gods. She is the "lady of every country, the goddess of ten thousand names".

Rival cults shared freely with each other their practices and ritual. The gods were at home wherever they went--a startling contrast to the days in which each one had his own group of followers on his own territory where alone he could be properly worshiped. Only the God of the Jews in this age of uniting faiths drew coldly apart and would brook no converse with the heathen.

As the individualities of the different deities tended thus to become less distinct and more inclusive, a pantheistic tendency was evident. On the other hand, the feeling that under all the variations in terminology and belief and practice, one great Deity was manifesting himself

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<sup>1</sup>Grenfel and Hunt, Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Volume II, p. 190



among men lays a basis for monotheism. At first this syncretistic process went on unconsciously among the masses of the people as an inevitable result of the conditions of the age, though later the intellectual classes more deliberately took it under their supervision and made a system of it.

The process of syncretism is full of significance for the early development of Christianity. It has often been emphasized that there were certain factors such as a common language, a universal government, a great system of highways, which facilitated the spread of Christianity over the Mediterranean world. But the fact has been too little stressed that there was a common language of the mind and heart, a common soil of religious ideas, usages, and practices in which the new religion could take root; and there came a time when the yielding within and the pressure without common fears and desires born of the vast commingling of races, which were reaching out for any and every means of satisfaction. Syncretism is the expression of these conditions. Judaism had not spread successfully for it refused to too large an extent to mingle with other religions on a common footing. This was at once its strength and its weakness. But it was cast and set in its centuries old mould while Christianity was fresh and flexible. It had lost its flexibility by increasing conformity to a legal system, while Christianity was in the more malleable period of a creative, emotional life. It went out into the Gentile world ready, not only to give but to receive, ready to speak the language of the pagan world, and not that alone, but ready to think its thoughts, throb with its emotions, fear its fears, and pulsate with its hopes. And yet it was endowed from the beginning with a finer feeling, an unconsciously discriminative power, which made it, in the words of Paul, "distinguish the things that differed", reject the crassest and coarsest, and refuse too close an alliance with the surrounding pagan beliefs.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE WORLD OF THE JEWS

Hidden away among the mountains of Palestine was a small part of the Græco-Roman world which refused full participation in the Hellenistic life of the first century. The Jews were in the world, yet not of it. Entrenched from time immemorial in their traditional customs and beliefs, secure in the sense of being a chosen race, they sought to hold themselves in complete isolation from the allurements and dangers of the outside world. It had once been comparatively easy, but with the penetration of Hellenistic culture into every part of the world, the germ had attacked their own people, and there came a time when the yielding within and the pressure without threatened to break down barriers of even Jewish reserve. It was met, however, by a spasmodic and convulsive contraction into their own narrow house in the days of the Maccabees and a continued effort to guard themselves against foreign encroachments by means of a growing legalism. The policy of Antiochus Epiphanes, which aimed at forcing the Jews into greater religious unity with the kingdom of the Seleucids, has usually been emphasized as the cause of the resistance under Judas Maccabee and his brothers. The fact of real significance, however, which lay behind this violent outbreak, was the hold which the charm of Greek civilization was getting on a certain class of Jewish society. So subtly and gradually was it pervading Jewish life, that had it not been for the sudden awakening and revolution it might have undermined even Jewish national exclusiveness.

While this was a critical moment in Jewish history, the influence of foreign ideas can be clearly observed in the contact with Babylonian and



Persian culture in the time of the exile. From that time date the conceptions of a realm of evil spirits over against the good, of a resurrection, the judgment, heaven and hell.

Until comparatively recent times the significance has not been appreciated of that mass of apocalyptic and pseudepigraphic literature which was composed by the Jews in the two or three centuries preceding the Christian era, writings which were later repudiated by Jewish religious leaders because they say in them elements foreign to essentially Jewish thought. The conception of the two ages, the present evil one and the glorious future to come, the pessimistic feeling about the present world which is growing old in its sins and drawing to its close is vividly reflected in 2 Baruch 85:10.

"The youth of the world is past,  
The strength of creation is already exhausted,  
The pitcher is near to the cistern and the ship to the port;  
And the course of the journey to the city,  
And life to its consummation."

A speculative and sceptical note foreign to earlier Jewish thought may be traced to Hellenistic influence; and the wisdom idea prominent in such books as the Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach bears evident marks of contact with Greek philosophic thought in regard to the Logos.

These examples will be sufficient to show the way in which the dominant religio-philosophic thought of Hellenism was making itself felt even in Palestine, in spite of conscious efforts to check it. When we turn to the world of the Jewish people scattered throughout every country of the Graeco-Roman world, it is not possible to preserve any fiction of independence of the vigorous thought life by which they were surrounded. The influence of language itself, though subtle, is none the less real, and a people who had forgotten the speech of their mother land could no longer



think its thoughts. The making of the Greek translation of the Scriptures is thus significant.

In the active propagandist efforts of the Jews of the Diaspora, moreover, are to be seen striking evidences of the pressure of Hellenistic thought upon the traditional Judaism. In Palestine the Jews were largely on the defensive. In other countries they were reaching out to plant their monotheistic faith among the pagans. In order to do this, they found it necessary to recreate the particularistic, literal, baldly theological, and often anthropomorphic conceptions of Judaism in the more universal, symbolical, and philosophical terms of Hellenism. Nor is it to be supposed that this was merely an accommodation on the part of the Jews. They could not live in the very midst of changed social conditions and of an intense, vivid, intellectual and emotional life without being sensibly affected by it.

The most outstanding product of this development of Judaism on Hellenistic soil is Philo. Born and reared in the very centre of Hellenistic intellectual activity--Alexandria--and belonging to a family of wealth and rank, he was from his earliest days thrown into the thick of non-Jewish influences. In a time when some Jews were allegorising away the Law, while others held to the conservative extreme, Philo took a middle ground and "effected harmony between the literal and the allegorical sense of the Torah, the legal and spiritual sides of Judaism and Greek philosophy and revealed religion".<sup>1</sup> Philo was loyal to his ancestral religion, but feeling the attraction of Greek philosophical ideas, he combined the two in an effort to make Judaism more universal.

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<sup>1</sup>H. Brutwich, Hellenism, p.



more acceptable to the Greeks, as well as to Jews who were rebelling against the narrow, traditional interpretation of the Torah. In order to spiritualize the contents of the Pentateuch, he adopted the allegorical method which had been in use by the Stoics in their attempts to preserve the values in the Homeric literature. In a time when men could not grasp the historical and developmental in religion, some such method had to be adopted if the material and mythical were to be given any meaning for those who sought life's values in spiritual terms, and if the sacred literature was to be preserved as a unity. So Platonic idealism was read into Genesis, the logos idea was introduced, the Stoic law of nature was found in Mosaic legislation in the idea that obedience to law should be obedience to one's higher nature. Philonism, however, like the philosophy in whose circles it moved was not a teaching for the mass of mankind, but for the few. Moreover, it was not intended to reach out into the Gentile world, except incidentally, but was designed to bridge for the Jews the chasm between their own religion and Greek ideas. It is most illuminating, however, for the effect that Hellenism was having on many Jews of the Diaspora. This movement was especially noticeable in Alexandria which was a literary and intellectual centre of Hellenism, but it was characteristic in greater or less degree, of all Hellenistic cities--of Tarsus, for example, the birthplace of Paul.

We must not pass from this sketch of Jewish life of the first century without a mention of the Essenes, a Palestinian sect, with an esoteric teaching strongly influenced by Platonism and Pythagoreanism. Their belief in the dualism of body and soul, the practice of asceticism and the mystical and ecstatic experiences point clearly to extra-Palestinian origins.



CHAPTER IV

PAUL IN THE GENTILE WORLD

The object of the preceding chapters has been to recreate to some extent the life and thought of the society in which the apostle Paul lived, in which he developed a particular type of Christianity, and in which his own personal experience as a Christian matured. For without an understanding of this society, it is useless to attempt to arrive at a correct appreciation of the man or his work. Each age recreates the past for itself; and more or less in terms of present values. Especially is this true of a period of history, of persons, or of a literature, to which supernatural sanctions have been given in a peculiar degree. The New Testament has thus been recreated for succeeding generations. It has been necessary to gather up the values of the past and translate them into terms of the present in order that they may lend their sanctions to the aims and ideals of the new time. It is true that there are certain elements in human experience that are perennial and never lose their functioning power. But it is also true that there is great loss in a failure to grasp the immediate values of persons or of ideas in the time and circumstances in which they have their origins; and for a correct appreciation, it is fatal. However large a meaning an individual such as Paul may have for a later age when interpreted in more universal terms, it is none the less true that that same recreated person would have had no meaning for his own society. It is not as an anachronism, that we want to consider the apostle to the Gentiles, but as an integral factor in that Gentile world. It was, as we have seen, a world which was



thinking along lines determined by the conditions of that time; yet a world which had clear and definite needs, and correspondingly definite demands to make of any religion which could expect allegiance. Paul came into this Gentile society, not with an old religion, inflexible, straitened in centuries of tradition, and adapting itself with difficulty to a new environment; but free, fresh, spontaneous, receptive. Nor are we to think of Paul, as leader in the communities in which he worked, as standing on the outside, consciously adapting and moulding the new faith to suit the needs of people. The Jesus of history did not become the Christ of faith as a result of a deliberate purpose to free Christianity from the trammels of Judaism and thus make an appeal to the pagan world. The new religion did not assume a clothing of myth and sacrament in order to present itself in familiar guise to the Gentiles. Whatever process of this kind might go on in the case of deliberate propaganda of an old and established religion in a foreign country, it would not be true of a religion in the making, in the hands of one who was at home in the scenes of activity. For Paul himself was developing religiously in this environment. His own experience and that of his converts were constantly interacting. There was no need to search for new vehicles to convey old ideas, for the new faith was spontaneously expressing itself in the language of the people among whom it was developing.

Paul himself was not so thoroughly Hellenistic that he did not have a conscious and definite attitude toward his Gentile environment. He always retained a strong Jewish consciousness. And in many respects this attitude was critical and hostile. But that did not preclude influence even in the fields in which that hostility was keen. The very thing, in fact, that a



man may believe himself to be fighting hardest frequently proves to be that which exercises determining influence. Paul was thinking in the language of his time. His religious needs were not utterly different from those of his associates and their religious satisfactions would not be entirely foreign to his own. His object was to reproduce in them the vital elements of his own experience. himself.

There was abundant opportunity in Tarsus for contact with the mystery religions which had before this time made the conquest of Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup> Even Hitherto which Early Environment points of resemblance to

Before taking up Paul's work as a Christian leader, it will be necessary to sum up briefly the forces that went into the forming of his thought up to the time when he became a Christian. The sources for such

As for the time spent by Paul in Jerusalem, we have only the statements in Acts 21:17. His own writings contain no definite information on this point. Any close contact with Judaism in Jerusalem has been denied him by secondary source material.

In Tarsus,<sup>1</sup> Paul had before him a Hellenistic society in miniature. Home of a great university, a centre of Stoic teaching, it had the greatest intellectual and literary advantages. An important industrial and commercial city, it had open doors for people from all parts of the world. Paul's own family belonged to the respectable merchant and manufacturing class; and though Jews, they must have come into close contact with the business world. It is not necessary to suppose with some that Paul attended a Greek school. But our evidence in regard to the Jews of the dispersion is overwhelmingly in favor of their close acquaintance with the Greek ideas which were the

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<sup>1</sup>See Ramsay's Cities of Paul, also Böhlig's Geisteskultur von Tarsus



liberal form of Christianity. Whether or not he had an active part in popular possession. They spoke Greek and used the Greek translation of the Scriptures. The widespread proselytising movement alone would necessitate contacts in this field. Moreover, the case of Philo was not unique nor was Tarsus in a different class from Alexandria. Paul, to be sure, speaks of himself as a Hebrew of Hebrews; but Philo would have made the same claim for himself.

There was abundant opportunity in Tarsus for contact with the mystery religions which had before this time made the conquest of Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup> Even Mithraism which has such marked points of resemblance to Christianity must have been familiar to the Tarsians; for, though no early monuments are found in Tarsus itself, the cult was strong in Pontus and Cappadocia, and was doubtless known in Tarsus.<sup>2</sup>

As for the time spent by Paul in Jerusalem, we have only the statement in Acts 22:3. His own writings contain no definite information on this point. Any close contact with Judaism in Jerusalem has been denied him by some writers; but there is not sufficient warrant for doing this. We have seen that one would be by no means removed from Hellenising influences even there. Whether or not we are justified in accepting in detail the account in Acts of the persecution of Stephen,<sup>3</sup> we have at least reason to believe, (1) that there was a considerable element of Hellenistic Christianity in Jerusalem. All of the "Seven" were Hellenists and one a proselyte. (2) That they were marked by the liberalism of Hellenistic Jews in regard to the law. (3) That persecution was directed against them rather than against the Palestinian Christians. Paul's contacts would then be with this more

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<sup>1</sup> See Hans Böhlig, Geisteskultur von Tarsus  
<sup>2</sup> F. Cumont, Tarican, etc. p. 10  
<sup>3</sup> Acts 6, 7



liberal form of Christianity. Whether or not he had an active part in the Jerusalem persecution, or went with an official delegation to Damascus,<sup>1</sup> it seems from his own statement that he was there at the time of his conversion, (Gal. 1:17), and he may have carried on persecution in that city.

We have here to consider the possibility of a Gentile Christianity in existence before Paul. He is often regarded as the founder of Gentile Christianity, but as Bousset points out,<sup>2</sup> there were Hellenistic Christian communities in Antioch and Damascus, established independently of Paul. Even before his conversion, the idea of the Messiah of the coming age was being mediated by Hellenistic Jews to Gentiles, among whom it would be interpreted in accordance with the traditions and needs of the Gentile world for a present Savior and cultic lord.

### The Conversion

From the accounts in Acts,<sup>3</sup> different as they are in detail, though a leader, he was never a mere spectator. He came among people with these points may be noted: (1) Paul had an ecstatic experience in which he had a vision of Jesus. (2) There was a blinding light. (3) He remained for a time in a trance condition. (4) he recognized Jesus as Lord. We have here characteristics of a Gentile conversion to the mystery religions rather than a Jewish experience, even in the case of a proselyte.

Paul's own statements in regard to his conversion must be given most weight; but they are lacking in detail. The ideas of a sudden conversion and of a vision of Christ are found also in 1 Cor. 9:1 and Gal. 1:12-17.

<sup>1</sup>W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, p. 92

<sup>2</sup>*Kyrios Christos*, p. 92

<sup>3</sup>Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-16; 26:9-18



These passages will be discussed in greater detail in the last chapter. It is sufficient here to notice that the conversion seems to have taken place under Hellenistic-Jewish and probably Gentile, Christian influences; that it was in its nature a Gentile rather than a Jewish experience; and that Paul did not consider returning to Jerusalem, but began immediately his work of preaching the new faith among the Gentiles, first in Arabia, then in Damascus, and after a short time, in Syria and Cilicia (Gal. 1:17-21). That does not mean and women into the Christian groups, but Jesus Christ who had lived on earth, had suffered, died, had risen gloriously, and was now in a position of power where he could save his followers.

### Paul and the Gentile Communities

For a period of about fifteen years, we know nothing of the work of Paul beyond the fact that he was active in the cities of Syria and Asia Minor. During these years he was not merely preaching to congregations and working out a system of theology; he was living with people, hand to hand and heart to heart. Side by side with some of them he worked for a living. Though a leader, he was never a mere spectator. He came among people with a message of good news which he proclaimed joyfully. And the men and women who listened to him were not, in spite of much that was gross and evil, entirely given over to vice and frivolity in high circles and crime and degradation in low. It was not a world dancing on the brink of a precipice. They were the empire's ordinary citizens seeking to avoid life's evils and to possess its goods. They were in a large degree choosing the way of religion as a means of reaching this goal, and seriously and earnestly seeking to put themselves into effective relations with the forces which religion offered to this end. They were dealing, not with religious relics, outworn and losing their grip, but with powerful, vigorous, and attractive religions, of which Jesus is presented to the Gentile world as such a person. His



claiming for themselves complete efficacy. Paul himself is a live, keen, passionately religious individual, fired with a desire to make the new religion a working power in such communities.

At the very centre of this religion stands not an idea but a person; not alone a heavenly Messiah, waiting only the fulness of time to return in catastrophic might, but a present lord, active in the life of every individual. It was no idea of salvation by something called faith that drew men and women into the Christian groups, but Jesus Christ who had lived on earth, had suffered, died, had risen gloriously, and was now in a position of power where he could accomplish things for his followers.

#### Salvation from Powers of Evil

It has already been pointed out that a dominant note in Hellenistic society was fear--fear of the all pervading demonic powers of fate enthroned in the heavenly spheres, of death; and men craved freedom, a sense of security in this present life, and assurance that this life was not the end. Though there is not a great deal in Paul's letters which bears directly on the subject of demons, it is easy to see that it was an atmosphere in which men moved. Take the reverse side of the picture in 1 Cor. 5:5 and conceive of the state of mind of a group in which one person in league with a powerful demon could bring destruction upon another at his will. Or those who, like Paul, were the victims of an incurable malady, or who put themselves into touch with demons by eating food consecrated to them. The only hope of security is for a man to place himself under the control of a more powerful being whose aid he can invoke in time of stress. Jesus is presented to the Gentile world as such a person. His



very name is a power to cause demons to flee. (Acts 19: 13f.) A Christian can so appropriate for himself the power of Christ that he can withstand the attacks of the demonic leader and all his hosts.

Paul shares the conception of his time that there are powers in the heavens that control the destiny of men and are often inimical to their welfare. Christ on the cross had won a signal victory over the hostile beings entrenched in the law (Col. 2:14, 15). And Paul sings a psalm of praise to the beneficent lord who so links him in close companionship to himself that he can defy all the powers of the universe to tear him loose. (Rom. 8:38, 39) It is a great step in deliverance to be able to claim the aid of so mighty a being in time of emergency. But the Christian can go further. He can attain such a permanent relationship with Christ that he is lifted up on a higher plane of existence where he is no longer subject to the decrees of fate.

Moreover, the Christian, as he takes in the cosmic view, is convinced that the time of the demons is limited. The present age is given over to them by God's consent, but their time is short, and a new age will soon be ushered in which will witness their final overthrow and the triumph of God through Christ. (1 Co. 15:24f.)

### Salvation from Sin

The men and women of this Hellenistic society also demanded salvation from the power of sin. It is sometimes charged that the people of this time had no sense of sin, that it was a thought alien to the Greek mind which rated man and his attainments so high that they had no proper



conception of moral failure, but indulged wantonly in all excesses of immorality; that what weighed them down was not a sense of sin but dread of the demonic powers and of fate. The morality of the Greek gods is often pointed to as an index to that of their worshipers. True, the earlier Greeks had no such consciousness of sin as burdened the Hebrews, especially in the later stages of their history. But it is easy to exaggerate the moral carelessness of the Greeks. Gods are often permitted greater license than their followers. A society's growing sense of righteousness is seen in higher demands of their deities. The primitive idea of tabu and of mere ceremonial purity gradually grows into more highly ethical conceptions. Oriental influence, moreover, tended to deepen the sense of sin. While much of the elaborate Persian system of purification related to ceremonial impurity, there was not lacking in Mithraism a strong ethical element. Isis laid stern requirements of purity on those who would be her votaries, and the Hellenic-Egyptian Hermetic writings deal largely with the subject. The rigorous ideals of the Jews too, had made themselves felt in the Hellenistic world. Sin, in earlier philosophy, was regarded as lack of knowledge or of conformity to natural law, but the later philosophers are keenly aware of man's moral failure. While Paul, therefore, with his Jewish heritage of abhorrence of sin, deepens that sense in the Gentile communities, he does not create it.

In order to have a clearer understanding of the way in which Christianity was to function in this field, it is necessary to examine two of Paul's fundamental conceptions--the nature of man and the Spirit. Plato maintained the dualistic doctrine of the constitution of man--the soul or divine substance set sharply over against matter or the physical body. The two can have nothing in common, but are eternally at strife. Orphism,



Pythagoreanism, Essenism, contain the same idea. The Stoics could not logically hold such a conception since the divine substance permeating the universe was found in the body, as well as the soul, only in less pure form. Later Stoicism, however, in its eclectic mood, had taken over the dualistic idea. The mystery religions are pervaded with this pessimistic feeling in regard to the physical body as essentially evil, a drag on the soul in its aspirations toward God; and one of the objects of the mystery cults was to free man from the power of the flesh and permit them, while still in the body, to experience the freedom of the spirit realm. Gnosticism, which is found in its incipient stages in the first century,<sup>1</sup> and which grew up on this Hellenistic soil, is also distinguished by its dualism and pessimism. Man has in him a spark of divine light but it is lost in a world of matter and feels itself an alien. All that belongs to the material and visible world is evil and hostile to the invisible and divine. There is no help for man except as this divine in him can be awakened and developed and this can be accomplished not by man's own powers, but only by an external supernatural agency.

Paul holds this same conception of the flesh in common with his Gentile associates. It is the home of sin, its camping ground and base of operations in its warfare against good. (Rom. 7:16, 23; 8:3, 6-8; Gal. 5:17). It is not the purpose here to give a complete discussion of the doctrine of sin in Paul's writings, but rather to discover how the

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<sup>1</sup>While the developed Hermetic literature and gnosticism belong to the second century, their connection with ideas in the mystery religions is clear, and the soil out of which they grew was widespread in the first century. See Bousset *Kyrios Christos*, p. 141; Heinrici, *Hermetismus*, p. 4; Reitzenstein, *Paganismus*, pp. 1-36.

Hellenism! There is one element which all these conceptions have in common.



ordinary man or woman in the groups under Paul's guidance conceived of salvation from sin. As Paul looks at a group of these people, it is evident that he does not believe that there is any power in their lives at present that can keep them from sin. In the vivid language of the time, they are slaves sold under sin. Some sitting there before Paul were owned by one who called himself master and controlled the comings and goings of their lives so that they could not do the things they would. Some had been set free or ransomed themselves so that they owned no human lord. To those who regard sin as largely a matter of the will, it is difficult to grasp the poignant force of Paul's words when he says: "You are bond slaves and cannot get free of yourselves." There is, to be sure, a higher part of man's nature, Paul says, which really desires to do the things God requires. (Rom. 7:22, 23) It is the  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , or mind, which he seems to identify with the real ego. It wills to do the good and hates the evil. It despises the things which it sees sin in the flesh nature doing but it is powerless, and can only value the good without being able to realize it. And as long as a man retains his present nature, it will be impossible. There is no question of change of attitude and power of will. Only through Christ can a new element enter into man's lives which is powerful enough to conquer the old. The only thing that will avail is an entirely new nature in which the sin-flesh combination is impotent. (Rom. 6:6, 7; 8:1-8) The Spirit of God can enter into a man and effect this change.

This brings us to the second of our two conceptions. The activity of the Spirit is the key to the thinking of Paul in as far as there can be said to be a key idea. What were the conceptions of the Spirit in the Old Testament, in later Jewish writings, in primitive Christianity, and in Hellenism? There is one element which all these conceptions have in common.



The Spirit is never merely an influence, moral or otherwise. The ancient world did not think in terms of such immaterialities. In order to accomplish perceptible results a force must have substance, reality. The Greek  $\piνεύμα$  and Hebrew  $\רוח$  are words meaning wind, breath, an invisible but substantial power, immeasurably fine, subtle, ethereal, but quantitative. The Spirit idea was well known in Old Testament times, but there are marked differences between its conception then and that of Paul. Then, the Spirit came suddenly upon a man, a sudden access of power bringing about a certain definite result and then passing--a temporary possession only. It was a comparatively rare thing, coming only to a select few. It was not always beneficent in its workings, as, for example, Saul's seizures of melancholy. It had not necessarily any relation to ethics, (Judges 14:6). It induced ecstasy as in the case of Saul and the prophets, (1 Sam. 10:9f).

Later on, the great prophets were regarded as speaking their messages through the Spirit of God; but it was not a permanent possession, and did not become the foundation of a moral or religious life.

We do not find the Spirit playing a large part in the later non-canonical literature and in Judaism. Growing legalism tended to suppress that idea. The part played by angels in the apocalyptic writings corresponds, in reality, to the work of the Spirit. But these revelations are in regard to future events, the cosmic scheme, the nature and destiny of man. The whole idea may be often only a literary device. Wisdom, in such books as the Wisdom of Solomon, is, in a sense, the equivalent of the Spirit. But in none of these cases do we have the idea of a power resident in man and constituting the basis of a normal, righteous life. According to Philo, the Spirit is not a permanent possession, though it comes to every man at times.



As to the Spirit in primitive Christianity, we find these characteristics. (1) It comes as an accession from the supernatural world. (2) It is now the property, not of a spiritual aristocracy, but of all Christians, (Acts 2:17, 18). (3) Its presence is recognized by some extraordinary manifestation, ecstasy, or emotional excitation of some striking kind. Phenomena which could not be explained in any other way were attributed to the Spirit--miracles, unusual insight or wisdom, an irresistible power, (Acts 4:8, 31; 6:10). (4) The Spirit is now a beneficent power, but it is not always directed toward a constructive end, (Acts 10:46). Nor do we find the steady, moral-religious life of the individual attributed to it. The Spirit atmosphere is that of the unusual--God working in men in signs and wonders. (5) It is not intimately connected with Christ, though it has come as a result of his return to heaven.

The idea of an emanation from God is a familiar one in the Hellenistic world. We find it philosophically expressed in Stoicism with this difference, that here the divine essence is conceived of as constituting a part of man's original nature, while in the mysteries it is a supernatural inflow from deity which drives out a part of the old nature with which it is incompatible and replaces it. If we seek the idea in its earlier and cruder form, we find it in the eating of the sacrificial animal into which the god has entered. The primitive belief in a spirit world led to the desire to avoid possession by an evil spirit and become possessed by the good, and this idea passed over into that of possession by the Spirit of the god.<sup>1</sup> We find the means of obtaining the spirit

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<sup>1</sup>Kirsopp Lake, Earlier Epistles of Paul, p. 192



differing, and the idea becoming more refined as we advance, but fundamentally it is the same. It ranges all the way from the notion of a portion of the divine nature entering into the human and creating certain new possibilities, to that of a complete substitution of a new ego and so complete a transformation that the individual becomes truly a god. Isis puts a new life into her devotee and he is reborn. In the Egyptian Magic the mystic prays: "I have received into myself an emanation from thee and now return in possession of thy divine nature".<sup>1</sup> In the Hermetic literature, where  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  is the base of the  $\pi\upsilon\lambda\upsilon\mu\alpha$  idea the mystic prays, "We beg thee, keep us in thy  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  and do not let this new life pass away". According to Reitzenstein, all of Paul's uses of  $\pi\upsilon\lambda\upsilon\mu\alpha$  are found in the magical papyri.<sup>2</sup>

It is evident in what sphere of thinking the Pauline conception of the Spirit moves. In fact, so familiar was the idea to the people among whom he labored, that if he had put a different content into the word he would have had to explain himself at every turn. But he does not do this, simply assuming that they are on common ground. With him, as in the mysteries, the Spirit is a divine increment, replacing the old personality, and forming the basis of an entirely new existence. It is the foundation of the whole Christian life; and in these respects it differs radically from the Jewish and primitive Christian conceptions.

This new nature which one receives is innately hostile to the old in which qualities of evil are inherent. High class Roman women of the first century went to the temple of the god there to be "married" to him

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<sup>1</sup>Reitzenstein, *Mythos und Religion*, p. 31

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 48



and after such union any sin was felt to be an offense to the divine seed within them. In the Hermetic writings the  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , the equivalent of the  $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$ , is granted only to the pious and pure. It is regarded as causing the death of the old evil bodily inclinations--the old sinful nature perishes.<sup>1</sup>

Paul's idea of the nature and conquest of sin does not root itself in Jewish soil. Among the Jews, sin was conceived to be primarily the evil deed, the choice of wrong and the will to do it. In 2 Esdras we find the doctrine of the evil heart which prevents people from following the dictates of the law,<sup>2</sup> but true rabbinical teaching maintained that the law was sufficient to check evil impulse and lead to right action. With the Hellenist, the trouble lay in an evil nature, and the only effectual remedy was the substitution of a new nature for the old. When the Christian, therefore, has received within himself the spirit of Christ, a foundation is laid for a renovated moral being. To be under the power of sin with his spirit within is a contradiction in terms. "We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? For if we have grown into him by a death like his we shall grow into him by a resurrection like his knowing as we do that our old self has been crucified with him in order to crush the sinful body and free us from further slavery to sin." (Rom. 6:2,5,6). The fruits of the spirit are in striking contrast to the works of the flesh. (Gal. 5:19-24).

### Salvation from Death

Still another terror lay in wait for every citizen of the

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<sup>1</sup>Heinrich, *Hermetica Mystica*, pp. 22, 43, 67  
<sup>2</sup>2 Esdras 3:21-26



Graeco-Roman world; and from this more than from any other he demanded some power to free him. This enemy was death. The early Greeks like the early Hebrews were not greatly troubled about death. But with increasing individualism and the growing influence of the more somber orient, thoughts of death grew more dread and insistent, and in the first century no religion could hope to retain a hold which did not offer assurance of a life after death. We have seen how the horror of being forgotten weighed upon men, of dropping out of the life of the universe and by what means they tried to assure a living on in the thoughts of posterity. The philosophies offered little consolation and to the mystery religions men turned, hungry for some real conviction that a forlorn "tomorrow we die" was not to be the final word. What was the message of nature on this subject? The idea of the dying and rising savior-god was rooted in men's close sympathy with nature. What did the continuous round of the seasons mean to them? or the waxing and waning of the heavenly bodies? With dread they watched the quick withering and dying of the vivid life about them and the miracle of renewal never ceased to fill them with joy. The life of the god came to be identified with this succession of life and death in nature. The god died, but he too proved to have in himself the seed of immortality and he rose triumphant to a new existence. Could he not somehow communicate this germ of immortality to his followers? "If we have died with him, shall we not also live with him?" As Paul went about among men and women, he saw some who had prostrated themselves in mourning over the death of Adonis or Osiris, and who had risen in ecstasy of joy on his return to life; and this had been to them no orgy of emotion, no mere drama or spectacle, but a real experience of the heart craving the supreme good. Not for a mere stirring of the senses had the initiates endured the terrible ordeal of passing through the night haunted with fear in order to stand at last in



the light of the world beyond the shadows. "As truly as Osiris lives, shall he also live; as truly as Osiris is not dead, shall he not die; as truly as Osiris is not annihilated shall he not be annihilated."<sup>1</sup> Mithraism was especially confident in its assurance of a future life. The neophyte who, in any of the mysteries, had in ecstatic experience so participated in the earthly sufferings and death of the god that he felt himself to be one with him, also believed that he so shared in the resurrection experience that the god gave assurance of a participation in his own immortal life. The new life which entered into the initiate contained the seed of immortality, because it was divine life. The Stoic taught that the soul, by virtue of its divine substance lived on but the individual perished. The mystic demanded continued existence for his own personality. The Jews and early Christians viewed these things largely in national and cosmic values. The Torah embodied certain ideals for the individual and the national group which were imperfectly realized in the present imperfect age. When the new age was ushered in by God, loyal Jews and others who conformed to the same ideals would, ipso facto, be its citizens. Paul's ideas developed among people who had no national or institutional guarantees, and for whom a personal relation to deity was the determining factor; and his teachings about immortality are directed toward their needs. Rom. 6: 1-11 sets forth the assurance not only of a new moral life based on the union with Christ in death and resurrection and the new life created within, but also of a life with him after death. This promise of the Spirit is forcibly expressed in Rom. 8:11. "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal

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<sup>1</sup>7. Cumont, Oriental Religions, p. 100



bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you." The Christian has therefore the double assurance of the fact of Christ's triumph over death, and of his own spirit life within him. Only death and decay can be the heritage of the natural man, (1 Cor. 15:45). He has only  $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ , the vital principle; the Christian has  $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$ , the principle of immortality.

For Paul, the fact of the resurrection is bound up with that of immortality. It is this that he is arguing for in 1 Cor. 15. Persian religion taught a final resurrection and it is part of Paul's heritage from them through the Jews. But it was not an essential part of Greek thought. In the Hermetic writings, however, we find the conception of a fire body which the  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  will receive instead of the flesh and blood body it had on earth.<sup>1</sup> Without this new body the  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  would be naked. Cf. 1 Cor. 5:3. The  $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$  is at home in the flesh body. But the Spirit, though compelled for a time to remain in the flesh, longs for the new spiritual body which is its appropriate clothing for the Spirit world, (2 Cor. 5:1-9). Just as every part of the universe, vegetable, animal, human, and planetary life is conceived of as having its suitable body or clothing, so the divine Spirit in man on its entrance into the divine realm will receive what belongs to it.

Paul goes farther even than the conception of the presence of the Spirit as a pledge of immortality. The future order is present potentially in this present life on earth. Paul lived in a time when men thought, not in terms of a long process of evolution, but in terms of succeeding ages or cycles. Persian religion postulated an age of conflict between opposing forces to be followed by an age of the triumph of the good. In

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<sup>1</sup>Heinrich, Hermetik Mystik, p. 61



certain circles of Jewish thought we find the present evil, demon-controlled age to be succeeded by the age in which God rules. Greeks held the idea of recurring cycles--iron, silver, and gold ages. In the circles of the mysteries, men were constantly seeking escape even in life from the flesh body belonging to the evil world and a participation in the life of the world of deity. This they attained in dreams, visions, and ecstasy. For Paul, the individual in the new life will be only a part of the great world order which is to be ushered in as a triumph over the present. The mighty plan of God includes the entire creation. Rom. 8:19-22. The Gentiles could respond readily to his assertion that the world of nature is going through the same process of travail with men. Nature, like man, is suffering an incompleteness, failure, and eclipse. The final redemption of man will witness that of nature as well. But even now, in this present age, God has introduced a foretaste of the new order, a glimpse of the final consummation. Just as the Spirit is now dwelling in an alien body waiting for that which really belongs to it, so also the Christian community lives in an alien world waiting for the spiritual environment. Rom. 8:23-25. The Spirit-bearing men and women are living a little heaven on earth. What comes later will be fulfilment, complete realization of what exists potentially in the present. 1 Cor. 13:9-12. In this confidence, the Christian can feel himself lifted above the vicissitudes of life, demons, fate, death itself. What the philosopher hoped to accomplish by withdrawal into the secret strong recesses of his own soul, the Christian accomplishes by a personal union with the Spirit of his unseen Lord.



...and ... Communion with Deity ... which is so great a

...and even before death finally frees him from this burden.

Ancient society was acutely conscious of the vast world of the unseen. It felt its influence at every turn for evil and for good. But it was so oppressed by its conviction of helplessness in the hands of arbitrary and capricious powers, so burdened with the sense of the utter futility of all merely human effort in the material and sensuous world and in the body of flesh, that it was constantly reaching out for direct communion with the world of deity where alone was to be found freedom, security, truth, incorruption--everything of which they so keenly felt the lack in a world of sense. A passion took possession of men and women to break down the barriers between the human and divine, to cross the boundaries from one world into another and revel in the ecstasies of the very presence of deity. In earlier times, satisfaction was found in the eating of the animal in which the god was supposed to be embodied or in the bacchanalian orgies in which the god took possession of the worshiper. Later on the goal of the mystic was still to rid himself of the human and corruptible and experience within himself the birth of a god. So the Hermes mystic prays: "Come to me, Hermes, as the child into the body of the mother; I am thou and thou art myself. Thy name is mine and thine is mine. I am thy image." In Egyptian magic literature is found the prayer: "I am united with thy holy form, I have received power in thy name, I have taken into myself the emanation from thee and now return in possession of a divine nature."<sup>1</sup> But besides this experience of so taking the god into himself that he shares the divine nature, the mystic longs, in

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<sup>1</sup>Reitzenstein, Mysterien Religionen, p. 31



trance and ecstasy, to leave behind the flesh body which is so great a hindrance and even before death finally frees him from this burden, rise to the transcendental world, and stand in the very presence of the gods. This vision of deity is the supreme experience to which man can attain in his earthly life. Apuleius, in visions, sees the beneficent goddess near him. In his initiation he "approached the gods above and gods below and worshipped them face to face". The Hermes mystic prays, "Released by thee, we rejoice that thou hast shown thyself to us, rejoice that thou hast made us in our earthly life a god by the vision of thee".

So Paul found himself working among people who had this great desire. And he evidently regards this direct communion with deity and the vision of deity as a possible experience for he has had it himself as had others of the apostles. But he never claims for himself or another the vision of God and it is evident that he does not feel that his converts in the churches have attained even the vision of Christ. They have his spirit within them and through it have been reborn, they pray in the Spirit, the Spirit prays for them with unutterable sighings, they speak to God in ecstatic utterances, they receive revelations from him, and power to do miracles, but in regard to the highest experiences of all Paul evidences a certain restraint for them and for himself.

to such persons, but he himself saw the working of the Spirit in these demonstrations. (2 Cor. 12, 14).

### Satisfaction for the Emotional Life

Among large classes of people in Hellenistic society reason had abdicated to the emotions. Certain leaders in higher circles attempted to control the emotional excesses and at the same time retain the values insufficient without some tangible means by which salvation was felt to be



in the mystery religions. But the emotional craving demanded satisfaction and the mysteries supplied it. The very possession of secret rites and teaching was in itself a lure. The Isis worship, with its gorgeous processions, its elaborate ritual, its soul stirring drama of human and divine experience, tragedy, and ecstasy commingled, held irresistible fascination for all classes of people. And for those who went deeper into the mysteries there was not only the joy in meditation before the god or goddess, but also the ecstatic joy of the trance or vision in which the soul swung upward out of the realm of sense and experienced the rapture of heaven. No doubt one reason why Judaism made no more gain among the people was its lack of satisfactory outlet for the emotions. As Christianity developed under Paul it did not fail in this respect. Though Paul discouraged the very abandon of emotion, especially in public, yet if one were to go into a church service where several were speaking with tongues, others aglow with prophetic fervor, and still others quiver with divine revelation, there would seem to be no lack of emotional expression. The dramatic appeal of the sufferings of Jesus, the racking torment of the cross, the gloom of the burial, and the rapture of resurrection was by no means lacking in these elements. (1 Cor. 2:2 Gal. 3:1). States of excitement often resulted. (1 Cor. 2:4,5. Gal. 3:5). Paul's instinct for order and the things conducive to community growth led him to curb excesses, but he himself saw the working of the Spirit in these demonstrations. (1 Cor. 12, 14).

The conception of a holy church in which there should be power to drive out demons and wipe out pollution of the flesh was common.

#### Need for a Cult

Religion might give promise of salvation, but that in itself was insufficient without some tangible means by which salvation was felt to be



mediated. The change in the inner life was illusory without something's taking place in the world of sense which effected this--a channel through which divine power was made operative. Every religion needed its apparatus. Judaism had its machinery in the temple ritual and in the legal system. The mystery religions had theirs in systems of abstinence for the repression of the flesh and the liberation of the spirit, exorcism of demons, and all the elaborate ritual of initiation. There was no doubt in all this a large element of magic, a belief that certain forms had efficacy in themselves without regard to any inner attitude on the part of the believer. It was not the content of the prayer, nor the attitude of the pray-er that determined the efficacy of the prayer, but the time and place, the exact words and, above all, the exact knowledge of the use of the Name. The necessity of retaining the original form of a mysterious word is the only motive for the use of certain barbarian appellatives in magical incantations.<sup>1</sup> Such power over the god could be obtained by the possessor of these secrets that he could be constrained to do one's bidding. The same feeling is evident in the worshiper of the Virgin Mary who takes the Child from her arms until she will grant a request. Num. 6:13-6) The baptized person, having received

the Holy Spirit. Even in the higher conceptions of religion, there was felt the need for cultic rites; and prominent among these were baptism and the holy meal, which are found in some form in all the mysteries, and were regarded as efficacious means of coming into contact with deity.

The conception of a holy element in which there resided a power to drive out demons and wipe out pollutions of the flesh was common. Water was a most effective element, and water baptism was regarded as no

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<sup>1</sup>Y. Cumont, Oriental Religions, p. 96



were symbol. Actual work was done--the power of the deity operated in the substance. In the rite of the taurobolium the mystic received the spirit-bearing fluid into all the organs of sense--eyes, mouth, ears, nostrils were filled--and within the believer the divine nature was formed. The Mithraic mystic prays: "If it hath pleased you (gods) to grant me birth to immortality, that with the immortal Spirit and the immortal water I may through the Spirit be born again, that in me, purified by sacred rite and delivered from guilt the Holy Spirit may live and move."<sup>1</sup> According to the Hermetic writings, God sends the Spirit or  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  in a great vessel at baptism,<sup>2</sup> and without the baptism there is no  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . The use of the divine Name was an essential part of baptism since through that the power of the deity was made effective in the element.

Baptism<sup>3</sup> as practiced in Judaism was not sacramental, but no such rite could have been carried into the society of the mystery religions without gaining that significance. It is evident that Paul attached such a meaning to it. In the passing under the water and the emergence from it the Christian initiate identifies himself with the experiences of Christ in death and resurrection; and his old nature dies and the new is born. (Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-6) The baptized person, having received the Spirit, became a member of the mystical body of Christ.

There is, in reality, no incongruity in the ideas of faith and baptism. Faith is the primary requisite without which one would not come to the following steps. Faith made possible the working out of the whole divine plan for the individual, but no Christian in a Pauline community

<sup>1</sup> Dieterich, *Mithras liturgie*, p. 8

<sup>2</sup> Heinrich, *Hermetische Mystik*, p. 44

<sup>3</sup> See Heitsch, *Taufe und Abendmahl*



would have felt that alone to be efficacious in introducing him into the new life.

The sacred meal was also a rite by means of which saving relation with the deity was secured. In this meal we find both the ideas of a memorial and of a sacramental rite. Osiris gives Isis and Horus his blood to drink that they may not forget him in death and that they may look forward to a reunion. The monuments of Mithra represent him eating a farewell banquet with the Sun before his ascent to heaven; and other representations are found in which two neophytes take the place of the two deities while others are gathered around.<sup>1</sup> An early idea in the meal was no doubt that of table companionship among the god and his worshippers. But as time passed, and new conditions and new needs developed, especially the need of a real saving communion with the god, the meal inevitably took on the significance of a means whereby this communion was attained. In crude form it is found in eating the sacrificial animal and so partaking of the divine substance. In Mithraism, the consecrated bread and wine were offered to only the highest initiates; and the magic draught was supposed to impart health and wisdom and power to conquer the spirits of evil. At the end of time, Mithra will raise the dead and pour out the wine of immortality for the righteous.<sup>2</sup> The Phrygian mystic in initiation says: "I have eaten from the tambourine; I have drunk from the cymbal; I have become a mystic of Attis".

The Lord's Supper was no doubt celebrated among the early Christians as a meal in anticipation of the reunion with Christ at the Messianic banquet

<sup>1</sup> F. Cumont, *Taxila*, etc., 174, 175

<sup>2</sup> F. Cumont, *Oriental Religions*, p. 159



in the Kingdom; for they were looking forward not backwards. With the emphasis in Pauline circles on the significance of the death and resurrection, it becomes a memorial feast commemorating that event. (1 Cor. 11: 23-25) And it is evident that it is regarded as a means by which the believers come to partake of the Spirit of Christ; and thus come to be one body as they share in this Spirit. (1 Cor. 10: 16, 17) Many a Christian had eaten meat which, having been consecrated to a demon, brought the eater into vital communion with that demon. But Paul claims the exclusive right of Christ over the Christian in this regard. (1 Cor. 10: 20-22) There is such power in the elements themselves that automatically they result in illness or death to the one who partakes of them in the wrong spirit (1 Cor. 11:29,30)

Though to the modern mind there may be incongruity between the ideas of faith and sacrament, the spiritual and the material, to the ancient mind there was none. They thought in terms of substance realities. The Spirit produced certain effects in the believer; but an attitude of confidence and receptivity was necessary before the means by which God was willing to communicate the Spirit could be effective. So inseparable was the realm of the personal and spiritual from that of the material that the two united harmoniously in the conception of an effective means of salvation. It is inconceivable that Paul could have won his converts, if he had wanted to, to a conviction of the presence of the Spirit without outward and visible means of the accomplishment of the inner miracle. Was baptism to the man who had witnessed the terribly realistic spectacle of the taurobolium only a symbol of the transforming entrance of the Spirit into human life? Paul could point with confidence to the evidence of the presence of the Spirit in the πνευματικός but when and how did it get



there? Probably no man or woman in the Christian church would not have answered with the greatest conviction, "In baptism".

his supreme appeal for right conduct is based on the fact that the Christian, as bearer of the Christ Spirit, must of necessity live a virtuous life. The fruits **The Need of Standards of Conduct**

(Gal. 5:22-23) The old nature of evil had lost its control when Hellenistic society was by no means without its standards of right conduct. Philosophers occupied themselves much with the way of living. The Jews had a high system of morality; and the mystery religions were meeting the demand of the times with increased stress on ethics. Mithra, as god of light, bestowed wisdom and moral power on his followers. Serapis, as judge of man after death, pronounced his decrees not merely according to forms and rites, but according to freedom from moral taint. Even Isis, tolerant as she was in ethical matters, set certain standards of purity for her initiates. Yet moral laxity was widespread. Much of the purity demanded was only ceremonial. Orphism inculcated temperance and abstinence with the object of freeing the soul from fleshly evils and securing its escape to God. Hermetic writings teach that the good man closes the doors of the soul to evil, and  $\nu\omicron\delta\varsigma$  comes to his rescue in his struggle for the right.<sup>1</sup> The soul in its ascent to the heavenly regions puts off, in each of the seven spheres, the evil qualities it had gathered in its original descent to earth. But the motive was too often only escape from an evil degenerate world approaching its doom; and sometimes, where the feeling of the double personality was keen, there was a tendency to regard the soul as so removed from the flesh body that the latter could commit the grossest sins and the Spirit in its higher realm be free from taint.

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<sup>1</sup>Heinrich Hansen Nyatik, p. 13



Paul brings to his Gentile communities a keen sense of moral ideals and a horror of certain common forms of Gentile immorality. But his supreme appeal for right conduct is based on the fact that the Christian, as bearer of the Christ Spirit, must of necessity live a virtuous life. The fruits of the Spirit are certain ethical qualities. (Gal. 5: 22, 23) (Col. 3:12-14) The old nature of evil had lost its control when the Christians received the Christ nature. The hard fact remained that they did still sin; but they were no longer helpless in the clutches of sin. (Rom. 6:14-19) And with the strengthening of the new nature within them they would approach nearer to the ideal. Paul recognizes an element of conflict. (Gal. 5: 16, 17) Man is the battleground of opposing forces. But Paul's conception, taken as a whole, would lead to the conclusion that not the will of man is the decisive factor; but his attitude of faith or receptivity which makes possible increased endowments of the Spirit until the new life is realized in its completeness. There were, therefore, stages in the moral life, but not according to the modern developmental view. The new nature is composed of the qualities or powers of deity as the old is composed of qualities of evil which are conceived of as substantial, personal forces. A conflict ensues between these forces, inherently opposed to each other, until the victory is won by the powers of God.

Paul is concerned not only for the moral qualities which should characterize the Christian as an individual, but for those also which build up the group as a whole. This community interest was strong in him because he felt the practical necessity of unity, but preeminently because in the Christian group Christ was embodied on earth. That there should be rivalry and jealousy among Christians was treason to the Spirit they shared in common.



In Persian literature we find the conception of love, faith, fear of God, and knowledge as four seals with which the heart of the believer is sealed. Paul too felt that the triple seal of love, faith, and hope marked the Christian individual and community as the property of Christ.

The position has often been taken that Paul's personal religious experience was a unit quantity, determined at the time of his conversion, a source of the message which he afterwards carried into Gentile ground, but he is so great a degree influenced by that Gentile environment. It is conceived of as a stream, starting full from its source and passing on its way without contributions from the territory through which it passes. But such a view is not tenable. A man's inner life cannot be so regarded as a separate entity and distinguished from his outer life, his social contacts. The two develop in constant interaction. The conception of God is in itself fundamentally a social conception and his experience with God a social experience. If Paul had remained a Jewish Christian untouched by the outer world, expecting a Jewish Messiah, Jesus, to return and realize nationalistic hopes, his feeling about that Jesus would have been utterly different from the feeling we see reflected in his letters. The history of Christianity is the history of varying conceptions and ideas growing out of the changing social conditions of succeeding generations.

Paul's work is frequently conceived of as primarily a system of theology in which once his whole life and thinking are thought of as having been cast into shape in one catastrophic moment, the withdrawal into isolation following in order that he might adjust the jumbled elements of his collection, and the remainder of his life working itself out in logical development from this one traumatic moment. On the other hand, we have the idea of a man of vigor and activity, an intensely religious individual, working in close contact with other religiously interested individuals in a definite social



CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PAUL'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

The position has often been taken that Paul's personal religious experience was a set quantity, determined at the time of his conversion, a source of the message which he afterwards carried onto Gentile ground, but in no great degree influenced by that Gentile environment. It is conceived of as a stream, starting full from its source and passing on its way without contributions from the territory through which it passes. But such a view is not tenable. A man's inner life cannot be so regarded as a separate entity and distinguished from his outer life, his social contacts. The two develop in constant interaction. The conception of God is in itself fundamentally a social conception and his experience with God a social experience. If Paul had remained a Jewish Christian untouched by the outer world, expecting a Jewish Messiah, Jesus, to return and realize nationalistic hopes, his feeling about that Jesus would have<sup>been</sup> utterly different from the feeling we see reflected in his letters. The history of Christianity is the history of varying conceptions and ideas growing out of the changing social conditions of succeeding generations.

Paul's work is frequently conceived of as primarily a system of theology in which case his whole life and teaching are thought of as having been cast into shape in one cataclysmic moment, the withdrawal into Arabia following in order that he might adjust the jarred elements of his existence, and the remainder of his life working itself out in logical development from this one tremendous impetus. On the other hand, we have the idea of a man of vigor and activity, an intensely religious individual, working in close contact with other religiously interested individuals in a definite social



environment in which his own experience was being developed, ever changing, ever growing. It is only from this second point of view that Paul's writings become in themselves intelligible and an intelligible reflection of the man and of the religious movement in which he was a leader. It is only in this light that Paul and his work become a unity.

The attempt is frequently made to chart the sources of Paul's thinking, these elements from his Jewish heritage, those from his Gentile environment, and others which refuse to be derived from either source, attributed to his inner experience. But unless one is to make of Paul merely a psychological or philological study, such a method can bring no satisfactory results. In the first place, what are called the Jewish and Hellenistic streams are partially blended before they reach him, in his environment, in his mental attitude, and in the primitive Christianity from which his Christian experience dates. In the second place, as Paul's work progresses in active contacts in the Gentile communities, these two streams are constantly mingled into one and his own personal experience takes shape in the whole formative process. This is far from saying that the inner experience of a passionately religious man like Paul was not itself a formative influence of tremendous weight in shaping his teaching and guiding his activity. This was bound to be the case since Paul, unlike many moderns, and men, too, of his own day, did not fall heir to a completely worked out system of ideas and machinery of action as he entered on his missionary career. It is saying that Paul's religious genius consisted, not in an absolute experience of God and the power to derive therefrom a logical system of doctrine; but in the ability to make certain central religious ideas and convictions function vitally in intimate contacts with groups of people who themselves were not passive recipients, but by their demands and responses helped to create that individual and group movement



called Pauline Christianity. In this atmosphere, full of life and charged with emotion, the apostle's own inner life develops, at the same time cause and effect, never a thing apart.

### Experience of God

Paul had a vital experience with God in the two great stages of his religious life. But he sees Him through different mediums in these stages--in the first, through the law; in the second, through Christ. It does not follow that he first knew Him only as a God of naked justice or of wrath and later as God of love. Yet there were necessarily deep seated differences.

In the world of the mystery religions it was not the supreme God with whom man came most closely into contact. It was ever the savior god, the one who suffered on earth, who died and rose again, with whom they identified themselves, and who wrought their salvation. The idea of mediaries between the highest god and man was common. The logos idea was prominent in certain circles, even among Hellenistic Jews. Wisdom occupies the same position with some writers, angels mediate revelations to the apocalyptic seers. Paul is here on the ground of the mysteries for it is in Jesus as savior-god that his interest centres. Paul's earlier religious experience, however, had been with God, and He by no means steps into the background of the Christian's life.

He is first of all conscious of God as the author of a great cosmic scheme, a plan which has long been the divine secret and which Paul calls God's mystery. (1 Cor. 2:7) This mystery he characterizes in different ways, sometimes as the good news to the Gentiles (Col. 1<sup>27</sup>), again



as Christ himself, (Col. 2:2,3). It is the sum of all of God's gracious purposes for men. It involves men's individual redemption and the defeat of the old demon possessed, corruptible age and the ushering in of the new, spiritual age. And since this great consummation is so near at hand, it is constantly present in Paul's thought. (1 Thess. 4:17; Phil. 3:20,21) While the whole plan is of God's inauguration and expresses His attitude toward men, Christ is at the very heart of it and inseparable from all of God's activities. Paul himself is keenly conscious of being an integral factor in the whole, for God has given him a work which is vital in hastening the day of ultimate realization.

Paul feels that God is making choice of individuals and nations for the part they are to have in the new era. The idea of selection does not figure as obscurely in his conception of things as is sometimes supposed. He was familiar, of course, with the idea of God's selection of Israel and in the face of adverse facts, he still clings to the belief that the Jews will eventually become Christian (Rom. 9-11). But on Hellenistic soil the individual idea necessarily becomes more prominent, and God is conceived of as calling each one to the new life (Rom. 8:29, 30) even as Isis and others called their followers. Rom. 10:13 does not contradict this idea for God is thought of as putting into a man's heart the initial desire. The old distinction of race, however, is wiped out, and Jews and Gentiles alike are called to sonship in the divine family. (Rom. 3:19,30).

The attribute of God which Paul most frequently emphasizes is His grace, His willingness to give. He makes the new religion the outcome of this attitude on God's part. As a Jew, he must have felt the divine favor as manifest in the giving of the law, but that fades into insignificance beside the supreme gift of salvation in Christ. The old relation he characterizes as that of debtor and creditor with the balance against man; but in



the new relation man is the recipient of God's free gift, (Rom. 6:23; Rom. 9:15). The conception of the new creation in Christ is, of course, at the bottom of this, for that would be something utterly impossible except as the gift of divine favor.

Other qualities of God which Paul stresses are His love and forbearance (Rom. 2:4), His mercy and comfort (2 Cor. 1:3; 7:6). God is concerned in the affairs of men (Phil. 2:13), supplies their need (Phil. 4:19) and directs their actions (1 Thess. 5<sup>11</sup>). Christ, however, is never absent from the thought of Paul in these activities of God. Though Paul prays and enjoins prayer to God, he still feels that the ground of his approach, his claim to be heard is his relation to Christ. Paul has communion with God in ecstasy (1 Cor. 14<sup>25</sup>), but it is because of the Christ Spirit within him.

Paul represents God as desiring to be known by men and as making this knowledge possible. Even to the Gentiles He gave the opportunity of knowing Him through the visible world of His creation, (Rom. 1:19f). The mystical  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  of deity was regarded in the Hellenistic world as the great privilege and the great virtue, and lack of knowledge as the supreme sin. So Paul thinks of God as having given over to the rule of evil powers those who refused to know Him (Rom. 1:26), and on the other hand, of making possible, through the gift of the Spirit, to all His followers. (1 Cor. 2:10f.) This  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  is thus not a thing communicated by teaching, but is a supernatural endowment. Likewise Paul feels that the initial step in the Christian life is evidenced, not by acquiescence in truths taught, but by the manifestations of the working of divine power. (1 Cor. 2:4,5)



### Experience of Christ

No highly developed Christology is to be found in Paul. Nor is this surprising, for Paul was heart and soul engaged in seeing that certain great ideas functioned practically among groups of people, and not in formulating ideas into a system. Christ is a fact of experience for himself and for the Christian community, far more than a subject of speculation.

There was a framework for the Christ idea, both among Palestinian Jews and Gentiles. For the former it was the Messiah conception, for the latter the savior-god. The former could not function beyond a certain point in time, the latter was of lasting validity; and only through the transformation of the former into the latter was Christ saved to the world. Paul's first contacts were with Christ, the object of the early Christians' upward and forward looking hope, and this conception never entirely vanishes from his thinking. It is the Lord Christ, however, that he knows in the Hellenistic world and this point of view remains dominant for him.

For Paul the historical Jesus practically vanishes in the heavenly Lord. To the modern mind, interested in the historical-social and ethical phases of religion, this seems strange. But it was not strange to a Christian of the first century. The idea of Jesus as a religious individual, the exponent of a fresh conception of the Fatherhood of God and of lofty ethical ideals, would not have functioned in a society which demanded a supernatural savior from the calamities of life. For them and for Paul, Christ's effective work began with his death and resurrection in which this work of rescue was accomplished. Paul, it is true, sometimes quotes a traditional word of Jesus as authority. But so strong is his sense of present communion with him, that the former is hardly more



than incidental. His is a gospel of revelation. It is not a question of opportunity of knowing the facts of Jesus' earthly career, except in so far as these may have formed a source from which Paul drew unconsciously. He himself did not feel that need. In much of Paul's ethical teaching he is on common ground with ethical teachers of the Graeco-Roman world, and he also drew from some of the same sources in Jewish religion from which Jesus himself drew. The central motive of Jesus' own religious life, the direct, vital, unmediated relation with God the Father, is not central for Paul. When he speaks of Jesus' humility and poverty (2 Cor. 8:9), he is not thinking of his personal attitude nor of his social station, as is sometimes supposed, but of the contrast between the heavenly and earthly existence. The most exalted life on earth would have been a humiliation for him from the point of view of one who held the dualistic ideas of the time. Just as in certain circles the god was conceived of as having been for a time engulfed in an alien world of material things, finally winning his way again to the world of spirit, so Christ, for the sake of man, lived out a brief period of humiliation in bodily form before rising to new glories in a higher realm.

Paul does not work out a consistent theory of the relation of God and Christ in this exalted spirit realm. He sometimes assigns a certain function to God and again to Christ. He identifies Christ and the Spirit and he speaks in one breath of the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9). He never identifies the two nor does he make Christ the equal of God. But in Christ the divine nature dwells supremely and absolutely, (Col. 1:19) and in him God has willed to make his self revelation to the world. In him the divine purposes for the world from creation on have been realized. (Col. 1:14-20) The background for this conception lies in the logos idea of the Hellenistic world, and in the related idea of Wisdom in



the Jewish Wisdom books.

These are ultimately not matters of speculation to Paul, but of practical import. The unshakable rock upon which Christian experience rests is the element of divine recreation in man, vital alike for the individual and for the group. And as this is identical with Christ, he becomes of supreme importance.

Paul emphasizes too the preeminence of Christ in all the spirit world for it is through man's relation to him that they are lifted out of the sphere of influence of these powers.

That this heavenly being came to earth, an element foreign to the divine nature, took on himself the sin-flesh body (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3), suffered as man, died a death regarded as a supreme curse (Gal. 3:13) is of the utmost importance to Paul; not because of the life he lived as a religious person, but the fact of his coming. In order to understand the significance of this experience for Paul, it is necessary to keep in mind (1) the dualistic conception of man and the universe; (2) that there were far reaching strata of thinking, represented in phases of the mystery religions, in early gnosticism, in the Hermetic literature--a blending of philosophy, religion, and mythology--in which the human race was conceived of as the progeny of the Urmensch who, with the nature of deity in himself, had come to earth and been lost, as it were, in the world of matter; in which there was also the idea of the hero-god who came to earth, combats the forces of evil, suffers, and returns triumphant to the divine world; (3) that there was such a conviction of the essential unity, solidarity, or vital sympathy in all creation that it was easy to think of the thing accomplished by one as being determinative for the whole--the experience of the primitive type is constantly repeated in those who follow. We have here a thread running



through the whole of Paul's thinking without a consideration of which his conception of the earthly life, the death, and resurrection of Jesus cannot be understood, (Rom. 5<sup>12-19</sup>; 6:1-11; 2Cor. 5:21; 1Cor. 15:12-24).

The salvation of man consists in this identification of himself with Christ in whom all these experiences were wrought out in ideal prototypal power.

A significant difference in Paul's thinking is that for him man has no original endowment of divine nature, no spark of deity which needs only rekindling and release, but is in a hopeless condition without a definite increment of divine substance. It is in the light of these beliefs that we can best understand the meaning of Christ's death for Paul. But it does not stand alone, it is bound up with his life, in the sense of incarnation, his conflict with sin and demonic powers, his resurrection, and final triumph. Paul's striking sense of participation in all the experiences of Christ thus becomes clear. The culmination of all, for the Christian, the supreme ground of his hope, lies in the possession of the Spirit or nature of Christ within him. It is in the groundwork of ideas such as these rather than in the realm of sacrifice and satisfaction that we must look for the essential elements of Paul's idea of redemption, keeping in mind that it is not intellectual speculation, but feeling, which is the constant principle of religious individuation for Paul. Paul is keenly conscious of the relation of the death of Christ to the forgiveness of sins and the coming into a right relationship with God but this is due, primarily, not to an atoning act, but to the totality of experience in which Paul shares and which reaches a climax in the sharing of divine nature which insures a release from the power of sin; for without this, forgiveness, or cancellation of past sins, would be of only partial value. Since Paul is not concerned with developing a consistent theory or doctrine, it is not surprising that other ideas appear.



as for example, in the discussion of the law, but these are not in the centre of his thinking.

Paul characterises his relation to the heavenly Lord as that of a bond slave (Phil. 1:1). He is Christ's property and bears his mark (Gal. 6:17), even as the Nigra mystic had, branded on his forehead, the mark of his lord. He feels that not only is Christ working through him among the Gentiles, (Rom. 15:18,19) (Col. 1:29); he is glorified in Paul, and also suffers in him (Col. 1:24; 2Cor. 4:10,11). Every activity of Paul is sanctioned and sanctified by his relation to Christ. Paul is happy in the confidence that Christ is his advocate before the Father (Rom. 8:34), and that no power of angels or demons can ever separate him from his love. (Rom. 8:35 f).

Another aspect of Paul's relation to Christ, so closely blended with that of the heavenly Lord as to be at times indistinguishable from it, which indeed was not separated in Paul's mind, is that of the Christ Spirit foundation of the new life, the mystical basis of the existence he is living in the midst of his old surroundings. It is, as has been said, the culmination of his sense of identification with Christ, so complete that it is no longer the old ego that is feeling and acting but a Christ ego. (Gal. 2:20). We cannot press these mystical ideas too closely, yet we may well ask, Just how does Paul conceive of this process? Is the old "I" absorbed? Is the individual swallowed up in deity? We do not have in Paul a pantheistic mysticism. He guards the boundaries of personality both for himself and Christ. We are not to think of a merging of the human personality in the divine--an absorption of one individuality in another. Nor are we to think merely of a higher control, an abasing or eclipse of one personality and possession by a higher. It is fundamentally



a new basis of being. That which animates the flesh body, aside from the mere life element in it, the volitional, emotional, part, is in one case material, in the other case spiritual, Christ spiritual. Paul is not the less himself, he is a new himself, and the new is substantially of the nature of Christ. It was not difficult for the Greek to conceive of himself as actually becoming god and of being worshipped by lesser beings as god, as after the taurobolium. But Paul never goes to this length. He becomes, with the divine nature within him, a superman, but he remains a man.

Paul uses a number of different expressions which are, as it were, so many different lights thrown on the one central conception, the new being created within the Christian. One of these is the figure of putting on Christ. "As many of you as were baptised into Christ did put on Christ." (Gal. 3:17) The coming of the Spirit into the Christian means taking on the character of Christ, not necessarily the moral character but his being or nature. In Col. 3:12 we have "Put on, as God's elect, a heart of compassion" etc. It is the idea of a character acquired, not developed, made possible by the Spirit basis of life. This conception of the putting on of a new nature as of a garment is a familiar one in the mystery religions. Apuleius, in his initiation, puts on twelve different garments significant of as many stages of deification and stands forth at last clothed in a heavenly garb and is adored as divine. The Mithra initiate, in the "Lion" degree puts on the heavenly dress and goes through the heavenly journey in which he is reborn and becomes a son of God. And the initiate in the "Persian" degree wears the Phrygian bonnet peculiar to Mithra as significant of his connection with the god.

When Paul says, "It is no longer I that live, Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20); "If any man is in Christ he is a new creature", (2 Cor. 5:17); and when he uses the terms "old" and "new man", he is not speaking figuratively, nor in terms of moral influence nor of volitional or emotional



re-creation. The certainty with which he speaks comes from the confidence of a substantial change in the nature of his being. The insistence with which Paul urges this fact of Christian experience reveals how vital he felt it to be for others and certainly, for himself as well. In times when an established religion is functioning in a settled environment, even a religious leader may use concepts which are not working values in his own life to a high degree. But Paul's conceptions were being constantly tested in an active, questioning society, and because he had no generations of established Christian tradition back of him, they were tested also in the fire of his own inner experience. It is hardly to the point to posit an alternative of Paul's Spirit experience as primary and direct, or secondary and derivative, more than it is to speak in the same terms of any one whose religious experience is influenced by social conceptions. His sense of God, of Christ, and of religious values was not necessarily the less keen and vital merely because of certain environmental forces which determined their direction.

Since Paul identifies Christ with the heavenly world of perfection and completeness, he, as a spirit bearing man, is acutely conscious of the evil and incomplete and transitory character of the present world, (Gal. 1:4). It is something to be delivered from and he longs to escape, (Phil. 1:22f. 2 Cor. 4:18). His feeling about the evil of the flesh body in which sin is entrenched is also intensified (Rom. 7:23,24). The question presents itself as to whether Paul felt that he was immune from sin on account of the Spirit life in him. There is no doubt that ideally the *πνευματικός* should not sin (Rom. 6:2); and it is significant that Paul does not speak of forgiveness of sins for himself or for other Christians. The forgiveness he talks about is in the past brought about by Christ's death. He is

at the mercy of supernatural powers, and no satisfaction is found in



not blind to the fact that Christians do sin, but it is because the Spirit nature is not sufficiently developed within them. As for himself, he is conscious of exemplary behavior (1 Thess. 3:10. 2 Cor. 1:12); and holds himself up as an example for his converts (Phil. 3:17; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1). He is not conscious of any wrong in himself, and he does not regard himself as subject to judgment by another, (1 Cor. 4:3 f). He himself can and does judge and direct others because he regards himself as father advanced in the spirit life than are his converts. His own case he feels to be as we shall see later on, unique.

The passage in Phil. 3:12-15 is not to be taken as implying consciousness of a moral lack. The goal to which he is looking forward here is the resurrection life which he so keenly anticipates. There were those among the mystery religions who felt that they had in their earthly life become divine and were actually able, before death, to enter into an experience of the future life. Paul does not feel that he has reached that goal, though he is confident of being *τελειος*, of having reached the highest development of spiritual life in this world.

We do not find Paul always on the same level of calm assurance. He feels the necessity of being on guard, of effort, and self control. (1 Cor. 9:26,27) But the Spirit in man is all sufficient if it is allowed control; and the dominant note in his utterances about himself is that of confidence, not in his human but in his Christ nature.

### Paul as *Εἰσωτικός*

The Greeks had gloried in the powers of the human mind. But Paul finds himself in the midst of people who, in a world of uncertainties and at the mercy of supernatural powers, had no satisfaction in recourse to



merely human knowledge, but sought it in direct communication with God. The beginnings of the elaborate system of  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  which reached its culmination in the following century are plainly visible at this time. In different forms and varying degrees it is found in all the mystery religions and was one of the great attractions they possessed. It deals in general with the possession of secrets in regard to the nature of the universe, of man's nature, of the divine world and the life to come, secrets ordinarily held in the keeping of the gods but revealed to the favored ones who received initiation into the mysteries. The seven stages of initiation into Mithraism corresponded to the seven planetary spheres through which the mystic passed, the favored one finally arriving at the eighth, the dwelling place of God himself. A gate barred the entrance to each sphere and the mystic must know the secret pass word in order to win his way.

In the Hermetic writings we meet with a highly developed conception of  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  of which the following points are of special interest here. God gives  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  to men in their earthly life through a revelation of himself usually in visions or ecstasy.  $\Gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  is the condition for the reception of  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . The  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  of God is man's highest good and lack of knowledge the greatest evil. God saves men by sending them the news of  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ .  $\Gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  is the basis of rebirth, the new life consisting of the powers of God freeing men from bodily limitations and permitting the ascent to heaven.

Paul uses  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  in a narrower sense than it is here used where it corresponds more to his use of  $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha$ .  $\Gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , however, plays a large part in Paul's conception of the new life. When Paul came for the first time to the Corinthians after his unfortunate experience in Athens, he cast aside all rhetorical or philosophical appeal and preached the simple stirring message of the cross. But he seems not to have satisfied a certain demand for "wisdom". He retorts that what ordinarily passes for wisdom is



despised by God, who, however, has revealed to his own chosen ones the mystery long guarded in the divine counsel alone. This mystery is the divine plan for the rescue of mankind from this present evil world,<sup>1</sup> the plan of which Christ is the sum and centre. Paul, as apostle, has had this fully revealed to him.<sup>2</sup> Such knowledge he has too because of his full possession of the Spirit to which the divine wisdom is known. (1 Cor. 2:10f)

The knowledge of God Himself is one great goal of  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ . God possesses a certain  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  of men, (1 Cor. 13:12; Gal. 4:9), and desires that men should know him, and has made this knowledge possible through the Spirit which knows him. (1 Cor. 2:10 f) In Christ, Paul feels that he has a knowledge of God's glory (2 Cor. 4:6), and indeed of all the wisdom God has for men (Col. 2:2,3). The new nature within man is recreating him toward a greater knowledge of the Creator. (Col. 3:10). The turning point in Paul's life had been the knowledge of Christ which God gave him. (Gal. 1:16)

Paul feels so confident about the program for the future because its source is this supernatural knowledge which has come to him. He knows the nature of the spiritual body and the order of events at the great consummation, (1 Cor. 15).

He feels too that he is endowed with an enlightened interpretation of scripture. As all the events of past ages have been only leading up to the great change which is close at hand, so the true meaning of much in the Scriptures lay in obscurity until the mystery was revealed to which it all had reference (1 Cor. 10:11; Gal. 3:8; Rom. 15:4). Paul, as exponent of the new order, is now gifted with the true interpretation of sayings and events in scripture.

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<sup>1</sup>Col. 1:25-29; Rom. 16:25; Col. 1:27  
<sup>2</sup>Gal. 1:12



body. While Paul is confident of a superior  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , he does not feel that it is complete in this life, and he longs for the new age in which his knowledge of things divine will be as full as that which deity has of him. (1 Cor. 13:9-12) *et.*

Paul's maintenance of absolute independence of man's demands or standards is very striking, but entirely consistent with his feeling of being a Spirit possessed Sense of Freedom. Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Just as the strength of being a Christian he is a member of Paul calls himself a bond slave of Christ, but in all other relations of life, he revels in a sense of freedom. This is the more pronounced because, in conflicts that arose in Corinth and in Galatia, he was forced to a defense of his own position. Aside from this, however, he feels that he, like other Christians, enjoys a unique liberty in Christ, a liberty based fundamentally on the fact that, as a new creation in Christ, he does not, in reality, belong to the evil, material world, but to the new, divine age. The forces that men dread and fear belong to this present world--demons, death, fate. As the property of Christ, he is protected from any demonic influence, (1 Cor. 8:5,6). The  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  of the real nature of idols and supernatural beings plays a part in this conception also.

Paul shared the general idea of the time that death was not a part of the natural order, but an alien, an enemy to be defeated. This defeat is accomplished for the Christian in the possession of the Spirit of immortality. Death becomes only an incident in the transition to a higher life (1 Cor. 15:54-57). For a part of his life at least, he felt that death would not enter into his own experience at all.

We have already spoken of the fact that Paul, as an advanced  $\pi\tau\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ , feels himself released from the power of sin in the flesh. *et.* His note is sounded in Paul's assertion of independence of all the



body. The sense of freedom from law is also prominent as well as from all ordinances and institutions of a world controlled by men or demons. (Col. 2:16-22) Paul's relation to the law will be dealt with more fully in the following chapter.

Paul's maintenance of absolute independence of men's demands or standards is very striking, but entirely consistent with his feeling of being a Spirit possessed man. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Just on the strength of being a Christian he is a member of that superior society which is above all human standards of judgment and is responsible to God alone--a society which shall one day judge even the world of angels. (1 Cor. 4:3,4; 6:104) But Paul is more than an ordinary Christian. He is *ἑταῖρος*, he is an apostle, and marked with distinction even among that select group, so that he is removed from the jurisdiction of even other leaders in the church, (1 Cor. 9:1; 12:11, 12. Gal. 1:17; 2:4-7).

For two considerations however Paul imposes voluntary restrictions upon himself. For the spread of the gospel and for the maintenance of unity and harmony in the "body" of Christ. His part in the great plan of God which is nearing its completion is to reveal the "mystery" to all the Gentile world so that at the coming in of the Jews as the final stage the world will be ripe for the dawn of the new age. To this end Paul is bending every energy he possesses. It involves the renunciation of certain rights that he could press if he chose, (1 Cor. 9:4-23). Paul as a "spiritual" man feels himself superior to all matters of food. But just as there are acts which are sins against the Christ in the individual so also there are sins against the Christ in the community and a lack of love or consideration for the "weak" brother is such a sin (1 Cor. 8:9-12). He waives his own rights, therefore, in deference to the well being of this larger body. A Stoic note is sounded in Paul's assertion of independence of all the



externals of life, (Phil. 4:11f). With the Stoic, however, it is due to a rational estimate of appearances at their true worth and an insight into their illusory character; with Paul, to the mystical sense of a nature which is removed from the world to which such things belong.

### Special Revelations and Ecstatic Experiences

Paul would not have made the difference that a modern person or even one of the primitive Christian group would have made between the ordinary conduct of everyday life and the more highly emotional experiences in as far as the source of each was concerned. Both proceeded equally from the new spirit foundation of one's being. The whole Christian life was on one level in that respect. The primitive Christians attributed only the unusual and striking to the Spirit's working. But to Paul, the calm exercise of judgment and deliberative choice or the exercise of self control under provocation were expressions of the Spirit life as truly as the working of a miracle. When he gave advice to his converts on affairs of daily conduct or procedure, he was as truly Spirit impelled as when he poured forth impassioned utterances in a public assembly (1 Cor. 7: 25, 40). There were, however, occasions when he believed himself to have received special communications from the heavenly Lord. He received divine guidance in certain special steps (Gal. 2:2). Communication of the deity in sleep or dreams was common in the world in which Paul lived. Thus Isis came to Apuleius and gave him instructions as to his initiations. In such passages as 1 Cor. 14:37 and 1 Cor. 7:10 he doubtless refers to some such specially imparted information. In the institution of the Lord's Supper,



1 Cor. 11:23, his words imply a direct communication. Even though a historical event is involved, he may well have reference to some divine authorisation for use in the church of a tradition in regard to the last meal with the disciples. 1 Cor. 15:3, on the other hand, carries no such implications, but suggests rather information which had come to him from the early church. Paul would certainly not regard as more authoritative, however, anything that came to him by such human channels than that which came through direct revelation, and probably not as much so. The larger question involved in the revelation of his gospel at the time of conversion will be taken up in the following chapter.

The members of the Pauline churches, like those of the mystery cults, demanded large satisfactions for the emotional life; and there is no evidence that Paul sought to restrain them except for the orderly and intelligible conduct of public services. He himself is by no means a stranger to the ecstatic experiences which his fellow Christians place such emphasis on. He thanks God that he speaks with tongues more than they all. The communion with God which Paul as a devout Palestinian Jew would have experienced in meditation upon God's goodness as revealed in the Torah or in fervent repetition of the psalms, Paul the Hellenistic Christian seeks in emotional rapture. Paul differs from mystics of some other times, however, in that he does not feel that direct communion with God is confined to those rare occasions when the soul shuts out all contact with the world of sense and by special means empties the human personality to create room for the inflow of the divine. For the divine is now at home in Paul. So strongly does the feeling of sonship well up in him at times that the cry of "Father" which breaks out is felt as the cry of the Christ Spirit itself. (Rom. 8:15) There are times when the Christian is struggling to find expression in prayer and gropes for his way. It is then, that with



unutterable sighings the Spirit in him prays for the Christian himself.

And God who understands the Spirit in man can understand these inarticulate utterings of the Spirit and knows that it is pleading for the individual with God.

### Vision of Deity

Paul treasures precious moments in which he has been caught up into states of rapture, experiences which may not be described in human language, which are too sacred and mysterious to make known. "I know a man in Christ, whether in the body, I know not, or whether out of the body I know not, God knoweth. Such a one caught up even to the third heaven-----how that he was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter." 2 Cor. 12:1-4. Heavenly journeys such as this the Hermes mystic could relate when the soul in ecstasy left the flesh body behind and swung up out of the world of sense into purer regions, "where the gleaming light is, there to look with the eyes of the heart on him who desires to be seen". Paul does not claim to have seen deity in this vision. In fact he never claims to have seen God though he rests all his right to apostleship on the great moment in his life when he saw the Christ of glory. 1 Cor. 15:8.

Paul is not as confident as some other mystics in regard to the soul's release from the body at such times as these. Nor does he feel that in his earthly life he can be so elevated above the material world that he is actually living a divine life with deity. Not until he can finally quit the flesh body at death does he feel that he can realise his great longing



to be with Christ. (Phil. 1:23-24)

It is sometimes claimed that ecstatic visions did not play a large part in the life of Paul since he has to go back fourteen years to cite one, and since he does not base the content of his gospel on such experiences. It is probable that Paul did not indulge in the extravagant emotional orgies that some other mystics revelled in. But we are not to depreciate the place they had in his life. That they were not rare is intimated in (2 Cor. 12:7). And the high estimate he placed on them is evident from his introductory words and from the fact that he regarded his "thorn in the flesh" as a means of repressing undue exaltation. As to the practical functional value of such experiences, Paul would hardly regard that in the same light as would a modern interpreter. The whole content of his gospel he regarded as of divine revelation (Gal. 1:13); and he himself would estimate nothing as of greater value in the individual Christian's life than direct communion with God.

#### Relation to the Christian Propaganda

Paul's apostolic consciousness is from first to last one of the striking features of his experience. He regards himself as a most important factor in the great conquest of Christianity in the Gentile world. The universal plan of God is clear. The new age is at hand. But it does not involve the conquest of the Gentile world as in the national hope of the Jews, nor their annihilation as in the apocalyptic hope. They are to be given the opportunity to enter into the kingdom as proleptically established. The next step will be the conversion of the Jews and then the end. Most important then, according to this conception is not the



establishment of well organized churches, but of as many Christian communities as possible in which the Spirit has absolute control. The function of the apostle is therefore of primary importance. Paul by no means regards himself as the only one to carry the gospel among the Gentiles (Rom. 15:20), but he does believe that he was singled out by God in a unique way for this work; and he never for a moment doubts that his own presentation of the message is the correct one. If he calls himself the least of the apostles, (1 Cor. 15:9), it is only because he wonders at God having chosen a persecutor of the faith, and not because he feels the slightest sense of inferiority to the other apostles (1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 1:1; 2 Cor. 11:5). Since the churches are Spirit controlled groups, rather than organizations, and since Paul was their divinely appointed leader and fully endowed with the Spirit, he feels himself in a unique position of authority among them, even as regards those he had not personally founded (Rom. 15:15f).

Paul is not alone in calling himself Father of the ones he had initiated into the Christian mysteries. The priest who officiated in the initiation of Apuleius is recognized by him as Father. The highest of the seven degrees in Mithraism is that of father. In the mysteries generally the one who was sufficiently advanced to induct others into the cult was thus designated. Paul seems, however, to have had a peculiarly intimate personal relationship to his converts due, no doubt, to the intensity of his natural feeling, and to his strong sense of the unity in the Christ Spirit. (1 Cor. 4:14, 15. 2 Cor. 13:14. Phil. 2:32) The Stoics taught a human brotherhood because of the common possession of the divine substance but their conception does not compare in warmth and intensity with that of Paul in his relations with his converts. (2 Cor. 11:



28, 29. 2 Co. 3:4) and which will appear in the life to come.

Paul's sense of leadership means not only concern, love, and ability to advise, but authority to legislate and discipline. Both in group and individual relationships is he confident of this right (1 Cor. 7-14; Philemon 8). Moreover, he is quick, in case of disobedience, to use the threat of the rod as with unruly children (2 Cor. 10:6; 13:2-10); and this not in his own right, but as representative of Christ (2 Cor. 13:10). Neither is it an empty threat for both Paul and his converts believe that he possesses a very substantial power over their physical and spiritual well being. (1 Cor. 5:3) for conversion. Still, it is significant that

toward the close of his life he had not given up hope of the speedy return of Christ.

#### SUMMARY

Paul's inner experience develops in the midst of social contacts in which Christianity as a group life and movement is growing, being vitally influenced by these contacts and, in turn exercising formative power. His own experience is based upon the companion conceptions which lie at the root of the Christian life and movement--the lordship of Christ and the re-creation in the divine spirit. There is no chasm between his experience and his message to the community, no accommodation to existing ideas and forms of speech, but rather an essential harmony in thought and expression, in his inner life and in his message to the group.

From his point of view, the inner life is not the result of a social or psychological process of evolution, but of the direct action of deity upon the individual. There are no powers inherent in the individual capable of unfolding into higher being. Only supernatural increments can lift him to a point where he can live the spiritual life in this world and



gain an essence of being which will endure in the life to come.

The question arises as to whether there is perceptible development in Paul's thinking in the period from which we have records. The idea of the Spirit, in which was laid the foundation for the other phases of his teaching and experience, had developed by the time the first letters were written. (1 Thess. 4:8; 5:19; Gal. 5:16-25). The ideas of faith, relation to the law, and his own apostolic consciousness were more fully developed in the conflict centering about the law. Greater development is seen by some in his ideas about the future, especially as he grew older and failed to witness the hoped for consummation. Phil. 4:5 suggests that toward the close of his life he had not given up hope of the speedy return of Christ.

There are some phases of Paul's experience which can be best understood only in the light of some such process, in particular his attitude toward his conversion and the law. The stress of circumstances caused him to react upon these two elements in his early life in such a way as to result in an explanation of those different from his actual contacts of them in the earlier period.

### Conversion

At an earlier point in the discussion we considered the circumstances leading up to Paul's conversion. To summarize briefly they were: (1) The influence of his early Hellenistic environment. (2) The contact with Hellenistic Jews and Hellenistic Christians at Damascus. (3) Contact with Gentile Christians at Antioch. He noted also that the characteristics of his conversion were Hellenistic rather than Jewish.



## CHAPTER VI

### PAUL'S REACTIONS UPON HIS EARLIER EXPERIENCES

The later experience of an individual constantly tends to react upon the earlier and reinterpret it in the light of changing personal and group thinking. This tendency to unify the personality by a reflection into the past of ideas and experiences that have come only at a later period is particularly pronounced when the later experience has been very full and active, marked by times of storm and stress, conflict within and without, when opinions have crystallised quickly under pressure from without.

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#### Conversion

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that his allegiance was given, not only to a Jewish Messiah whose significance was for the future, but also to a present Lord. This element of the lordship of Jesus was the watershed of experience between his old life and the new. The marks that are so distinctive of his life and message later on are not yet present. He did not in a period of retirement put together systematically all the elements of his later gospel. He did not and could not know what they would be for, as we have seen, they developed in response to the needs and demands of people who required definite satisfactions in the religious quest. But as Paul plunged into active work among the Gentiles at Damascus and Cilicia and Syria, he soon discovered what they were. And burning with all the enthusiasm of his vivid and intense nature for the new Lord of his life, he began to work out his own salvation with that of those about him. No definite decision was needed, based, as has sometimes been maintained, on a consciousness of the abrogation of the law through faith in Christ, to start him on his career among the Gentiles. He had been in contact with them much of his life. He had been converted among them. Many Jews of his day gave themselves largely to securing proselytes among the Gentiles. It was natural that he should continue among them working out his own religious problems as he ministered to their needs.

At the time when Paul wrote to the Galatians and Corinthians regarding his conversion, many years had elapsed, full of activity, in which the Christian movement was developing under his leadership and the outstanding elements of his teaching were determined. In the references to the conversion in Gal. 1<sup>11-16</sup> and 1 Cor. 15:8; 9:1 the basal conception of the re-creation in the Spirit is present as well as those of the selection and call by deity, revelation,  $\psi\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , and the vision of deity. If

asked, they could be the more readily perceived that the things he had taught them lacked finality. With the knowledge of the danger that was



in the ordinary course of events, Paul had interpreted his conversion, he would doubtless have done so in similar terms. But the conflict with Judaizing Christians in Galatia and with other opponents in Corinth, into which he finds himself thrust precipitates these inevitable reactions!

The earlier apostles had lived on more or less in the earlier environment and had not broken with the ancestral religion as Paul had. Other Jewish Christians, less liberal even than they, had looked with increasing suspicion upon the way in which Paul was alienating himself from Jewish ideals. The Gentile movement was growing rapidly and breaking away from the Jewish fold and gradually the opposition strengthened toward Paul and his work. It must not be supposed that these men were anything but sincere in their opposition. Judaism was the mother religion and they naturally looked with alarm upon the tendency in certain quarters to break loose one great branch from the parent stock. The law was to them the divine revelation to Israel. Jesus had not overthrown the law, and they, as his followers, believe themselves following along the true stream in their allegiance to Christ. The law, valid as it had ever been, was now in Christianity to benefit the Gentile world. Convinced that the influence of Paul was fatal to this ideal, they tried to counteract it in the Gentile communities. In this process it was inevitable that his authority should be questioned. Paul was no real apostle they insisted. He had not belonged to the privileged group of Christ's own followers, had not lived with him, learned from him and known him intimately as had the Twelve. He had not even seen him! Nor had he learned from those who were qualified to instruct him. This seed was sown in fertile soil. Those who knew the mystery religions were accustomed to revere the Father, their teacher and leader. In him they had all confidence. If their faith in Paul were shaken, they could be the more readily persuaded that the things he had taught them lacked finality. With the knowledge of the danger that was



threatening, all the passionate nature of Paul rose in a mighty defense of himself and his gospel. Behind his protest, however, there was more than an ordinary desire to defend oneself and one's work. With the increasing sense of Christ's Spirit resident in him, Paul had come to feel that it was the direct source of his gospel that it was in reality, not a message of his own at all, but one direct from God Himself. Any rebellion therefore against his authority is rebellion against the Lord of the church. In such conviction can he cry, "If we or an angel from heaven should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached, let him be anathema!"

In the stress of this conflict, Paul sinks the roots of his Christian career deep in his past--God had selected him even before his birth. The days of persecution of the primitive church stand out with all the greater enormity now in the light of the fact that they were his brothers in Christ whom he had persecuted. But even then he had been destined for his future career. Surely no one so mad could have been turned in his course except by the direct intervention of God. What would in the life of an ordinary Christian be a gradual process--the "hearing of faith", belief in Christ as the savior-god, baptism, with the coming of the Spirit, the successive stages of spiritual progress in which the old nature of sin is completely defeated and the new completely won, the final arrival at the advanced stage when one becomes *τελειος* with the *γνώσις* and vision of deity--all this is precipitated for Paul into one great experience. When God was ready to claim him He revealed His Son in the innermost depths of his being. (Gal. 1:15,16) This revelation of Christ is not to him a mere vision, nor an emotional experience of Christ, in his heart, a conviction of the authenticity of Christ as the Messiah of God, nor merely an insight into the person and character of Christ. We



cannot avoid the conclusion that Paul felt that on this occasion he had been reborn. Christ had in that moment been formed in him by the direct action of God, as he had been trying through pain like travail to form Christ in the hearts of his converts. To the ordinary man the knowledge of the "mystery" of God could not come in its fulness in a moment. Only as he becomes richer in his possession of the Spirit and his powers of apprehension increase, does he attain complete insight. But for Paul, the whole content of his gospel message--the meaning of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection, the conversion of the Gentile world, the new age to replace the old--is compressed into one overwhelming experience. It followed inevitably that he had no need to have recourse to human sources to supplement a gospel divinely revealed, no occasion for earthly sanction for his mission when he had it from above.

In the circle of the mystery religions in which Paul's experience had been formed the great goal was the vision of deity. It was that to which he aspired with all his heart. To be lifted out of the world of sense on the wings of pure spirit--to be brought, while still mortal, face to face with the divine, that was life, that was knowledge, that was immortality. Paul did not aim at the deification of the human but the key to all that he later accomplished or became was that exalted moment when he was granted this experience. He places it along with the visions the disciples had of the risen Christ. His whole Christian experience came to a focus in that first revelation--he had become *ΤΕΛΕΙΟΣ* in a supreme moment of time.



Faith and the Law

Faith versus the law as a means of justification has frequently been stressed as the central theme of Paul's teaching, and faith has been regarded as the foundation stone of his conception of redemption. But this is a mistaken emphasis. It seems to occupy so prominent a place because it bulks large in two of Paul's letters, those to the Galatians and to the Romans. These letters, however, belong to a certain phase of the Sturm and Drang period of his life and their subject matter is determined by the challenge put to him at that time. The subject of the law would by no means loom as large in the whole range of his teaching as in the literature preserved to us; and it is chiefly in connection with the law that Paul emphasizes the place of faith as a means of justification. For the basal theme in Paul's message we should look, not to these letters alone, but to others as well which were written under different circumstances. The underlying conception in all of these is the Christ Spirit re-creation in man as the means of salvation. Faith, it is true, is indispensable, and is closely united with the Spirit idea; but it is secondary, for it is not in itself an end, as much as a means to an end. It is the faith attitude that makes possible the reception of the Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 3:17; Gal. 3:2-5). Paul mentions faith more frequently than he does the Spirit, but it is always the latter in one or another of its forms of expression, that lies in the background of his thought.

The meaning of faith comes out clearly in a consideration of the way in which a person becomes a Christian. The individual basis of life is here presupposed as in the mystery religions, and not the national, as with the Jews. Every Jew was called to his religion by virtue of his birth.



Not so, the Gentile. The idea of faith is here linked with that of selection, an idea which has more importance in Paul than is usually conceded.<sup>1</sup> (Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 1:9,26) Paul preached to all men, but only those would respond whom God had chosen, into whose hearts He had put an answer to the call. Faith is thus the gift of God, and is the *führende gottheit*, the guiding divinity.<sup>2</sup> It is Paul's business to present the picture of the cross (1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 3:1) with its stirring appeal in setting forth the sufferings of Christ and the glorious promise of resurrection. Those whom God has called respond to it, not with an intellectual assent, but, emotionally stirred, with a surrender of the whole being. Certain experiences graphically depicted in 1 Cor. 2:4,5 and Gal. 3:2-5 accompany this faith acceptance of the message. It is not a question of the will or the intellect as in the case, even, of a proselyte's acceptance of the Jewish religion, but a vivid answer to God's gracious call to receive His son as Savior. (Eph. 2:8) Faith is therefore receptive rather than active, and in itself has no specific moral content. This, however, is only the initial stage in the Christian's experience, for if he were to stop here, he would indeed be in a hopeless condition, since he has not yet received the new nature. That is God's great gift of the Spirit life mediated in baptism to the one who has faith.

The work of faith is by no means completed at this stage, for it is vital for the continuous and increasing importation of the Spirit through which the Christian life is perfected. It is the condition of the new life (Gal. 2:20; Gal. 3:14). It is the state of being so open to the working of God that He can accomplish what He will in the Christian's life. It is the attitude in the individual which corresponds to God's grace, His willingness to give. It characterizes, therefore, a relationship to God diametrically

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<sup>1</sup>Rom. 9-11 is influenced by his apologetic purpose.

<sup>2</sup>For the idea in Egyptian Magic, see Reitzenstein, p. 95



opposed to that which Paul conceives of as underlying the law relationship to God, that of debtor and creditor. In his discussion of the law, therefore, he constantly opposes faith to law as the means of attaining a right standing with God.

Justification by faith as over against the law does not occupy a fundamental place in Paul's thought. Among the Jews justification was a forensic term used to designate the acquittal pronounced by God in His judgment on the man who satisfied the requirements of the law, the opposite of the sentence of condemnation. Such a man was pronounced righteous, rightly related to God. The term was not unknown in the Hellenistic world. In the Hermetic writings, for example, it denotes first, a negative stage--the driving out of the evil powers by the *vous*, and second, a positive stage, the entering in of the new nature when the god is born.<sup>1</sup> Paul, with his conception of the new creation in Christ is fundamentally more on Hellenistic than Jewish ground. For it is as a "new man" in Christ that the Christian can win the approval of God, (Rom. 8:1f). And only the man with faith can become this new creature. While the Jew maintained that the man who fulfilled the covenant relationship based on the law could claim a favorable verdict, Paul contended that such standing before God was possible only to the one who, utterly regardless of deeds of merit, gave himself over in the attitude of faith to receive the free gift of the Spirit. The forensic point of view is not prominent with Paul except in so far as he adopts it in his controversy with his Judaizing opponents.

The whole discussion of faith and the law was precipitated by the Judaizers. When Paul became a Christian, the mastering element in his new experience was the consciousness of Christ as Lord in his life. But there

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<sup>1</sup>Reitzenstein, *Mysterien Religionen*, pp. 111-114



is no evidence that the issue was then drawn between Christ and the law and that he cast the latter entirely aside. Nor did he stop in his busy career of preaching to relate all of his old ideas systematically to the new. It was many years after he began his missionary career before the matter came to such a climax that he was forced to a definite stand. As Paul worked among the Gentiles, the subject of the law did not come to the front, for he had joined a movement which was already partly Hellenized. Hellenistic Jews were more liberal in their interpretation of the law, many allegorized it, and some, even in Palestine, held circumcision as symbolical and spiritual especially for Gentiles,<sup>1</sup> and emphasized the moral rather than the ceremonial code. There was no need in the atmosphere of the Christ cult to discuss the law with the Gentiles, who had never known it. But Paul probably did not from the first cease to observe it for himself nor teach Jews to disregard it.

As the Spirit conception came to be fundamental in Paul's message, there was developed, as an inevitable corollary, a feeling of independence of all law as such. This, however, would not have resulted in a polemic against the law, and if it had not been for the Jewish element in the Christian communities, we should never have had these records of conflict centering about the law. There would inevitably be complications in the relations of Jews and Gentiles in the churches, and as the Gentile movement became more powerful, the alarm of the Jews was roused and an active policy of opposition was adopted. (Acts 15; Gal. 2)

The letter to the Galatians reveals systematic propaganda to establish the place of the law in Gentile Christian communities. If this

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<sup>1</sup>C. G. Montefiore, Synoptic Gospels, Vol. I, p. 79

priority in time (Gal. 3:17).



appeal had found no response among the Gentiles, Paul would never have risen up so passionately in protest. But those who knew the mystery religions were accustomed to the different stages of progress by which the devotees became perfected in the cult. They also felt the need of objective means by which the benefits of religion could be effected. The Christian religion did not offer as elaborate a cultic system as did some of the mysteries, and the advantage which the law offered as additional means of securing the satisfactions of which they were in need must have made a strong appeal to many who were eager to attain to higher degrees. Moreover, Paul's opponents made the most of the opportunity afforded by Paul's stress on faith and the Spirit life to reveal the weakness of his position from an ethical point of view.

But to one to whom the conception of the Christ Spirit was as vital as it was to Paul, the entire foundation of the Christian life was threatened and his whole being rose up in a mighty protest. His whole point of view is determined, not by his pre-Christian attitude toward the law, but by the Christian. It is the law viewed in the light of the divine creation in the individual, and not the law as it appeared to a Jew, which is depicted in Paul's letters. It is not surprising if at times we find the later attitude reflected back into the earlier period as a characteristic of that earlier point of view.

In his defense of his position, Paul maintains that the law is unable to make a man righteous in God's sight. He supports his statement partly by scripture (Gal. 3:11,12). If faith is the ordained means, the law cannot be, for law rests on a basis of merit or debt, while faith is on a basis of favor. (Rom. 4:4) Moreover, the faith method had the priority in time (Gal. 3:17).



Paul's deeper reason for asserting the law's impotence however, lies in his conception of the constitution of man. He is σαρκινός, and sin is bound up in this flesh nature so that man is utterly at the mercy of his evil impulses. The highest element in him is the νόος, which Paul says very little about, but which he regards as a capacity for recognizing the right but not for realizing it, an intellectual power to estimate truth but powerless to defeat the sin element. (Rom. 7:23) As ψυχικός, man is only on a level with the animal creation. The Jew believed not only that man, with free will and power to choose, was responsible for his actions, but that the law had in itself a motivating as well as a directing power and helped man to fulfil its demands. Paul's conception has little room for the will, and grants no such power to the law. Man is powerless to meet its demands. There is no hope for him ever, through law, attaining to such a state that he can win God's approval and be acquitted of the guilt of sin.

It was God's gracious purpose, however, that man should be saved, and He has provided the true way, the way through Christ. The law is thus rendered superfluous, since all that man ever claimed for it--and more--has been accomplished through him. It is not only the idea of Christ as lord of the believer's life that makes Paul's sense of contrast between him and the law so keen, but, even more, the idea of Christ as the divine nature in man. One might conceive of the law's having a place as an expression of God's will for the ordering of a man's life in relation to the lordship of Jesus over the Christian, but, granted the conception of the new inner being, in essence divine, as the sum of all guiding and motivating powers, and one would have to say with Paul that the law was not only unnecessary but incongruous. This is just what he does maintain. The law, from this point of view, far from representing an advance in the



Christian life, is a degradation of it to the flesh stage. (Gal. 3:3)

Paul's Judaizing opponents had been basing their arguments on an appeal to scripture, representing the law as no new thing, but grounded in God's dealings with men in antiquity; and this appeal was of peculiar validity to ancient peoples. Paul replies by going back of Moses to Abraham, taking as his key the words in Gen. 15<sup>6</sup> as representing God's attitude toward Abraham, and Hab. 2:4, the generalization of that attitude for all men. He makes an apt use of the experience of Abraham, from the point of view of one who, like the Christian, relies not on what he can do for himself, but on God's power working in him. Abraham is viewed as the progenitor in two long lines of descent--flesh and spirit, or promise. Hagar's children came by way of natural (flesh) creation; but in the case of Isaac, Sarah and Abraham were as impotent in themselves, as wholly dependent on God, as is the man who is living only on the flesh plane of life. As truly as God performed a miracle on the bodies of Abraham and Sarah, so truly He performs a miracle when the Christian receives his new nature. It is then evident (1) that God's original plan for man's salvation was not the way of the law and the flesh, but of the promise and the Spirit (Gal. 3:17), (2) that He revealed that plan in His dealings with Abraham (Gal. 3:8), (3) that in the history of the world ever since that time, God has had in mind the realization of this plan for all the faith-descendants of Abraham (Gal. 3:9), (4) the consummation of this plan was to come in Christ, the "seed" par excellence, of Abraham (Gal. 3:16), (5) the promise is based not on physical and national qualification, but on spiritual and individual qualifications. The Gentiles therefore share on equal terms with the Jews (Gal. 3:26-29. Col. 3:11. Eph. 2:15).

Since no purpose of God could ever be frustrated or fail, if the



law did not make men righteous, it followed that it was not intended to do so. Those who insisted on the law were in reality opposing the will of God and trying to set their own accomplishments up against the gift of God's love and favor, making these of no account. Since it was in Christ that God's favor revealed itself, those who insisted on the law's efficacy as a means of salvation were in fact rejecting Christ and making his death in vain! (Gal. 2:21)

Just what relation does Paul see between the death of Christ and the law? It is usually interpreted as being that the law had a validity which even God was bound to respect and that before it could be abrogated, its claims had to be met by a satisfaction, the payment of an innocent life instead of the lives of men which were forfeit; and that Christ in his death paid this penalty. Paul never makes a concise and complete statement of the meaning of Christ's death. But from the frequent and spontaneous references he makes to it, it is evident that it holds a fundamental place, not in a speculative system of thought, but in his Christian experience.

Paul's thought on the subject moves in various fields and it is difficult to combine his different utterances into a systematic whole. But one deep current of thought is found to run beneath all the varying forms of expression. Paul was dealing fundamentally, not with theories of satisfaction, expiation, or atonement, but with the facts of experience as he saw them--on the one hand, men caught in the grasp of sin with no way out, the law holding up an ideal embodied in a set of commands, but unable to help men to realize it--on the other hand, Christ dying, rising to new life and leading men to share in these same experiences. His dominant feeling is that Christ saved him from a fate from which the law could not save him and has brought him into a relation with God which the law could never



have effected (Rom. 6:23; 8:3). He is free from the law, not so much because of the satisfaction of any claim the law might have, as because he has found something effective to take its place. In the great scheme of salvation, Paul is not setting one set of acts over against a corresponding set of results, but is viewing whole processes. Adam had started a fatal chain of events in the world, and all men were bound up in it; he, as Mensch had involved humanity in a mass of evil in a lost world. (Rom. 5:12f). Christ came and set in operation a new set of events leading to release from this world of sin and death, and an entrance into the other world. (Rom. 5:15-19). The idea of human solidarity in the sense of a bond, actual and real, uniting men in such a way that a chain of causes and results affects all, is essential to Paul's thought; and preeminently the idea of union with Christ in his experiences.<sup>1</sup> Christ lived under the law as men were under the law (Gal. 4<sup>4</sup>), a man with men (Phil. 2:7,8. Gal. 4:4); he lived in a sin body as did men (2 Cor. 5:21); was subject to the penalty of the law as were men (Gal. 3:13); he suffered the doom of death pronounced on sin as men would have to. Men now identify themselves with Christ in death--Rom. 6:3-7 is not mere symbolism, something actually dies in the believer--Christ through the divine power working in him rises from the dead, and men rise with him (Rom. 6:4-11); Christ lives a glorified life with God, and men share that life in the possession of the new nature which is a partial realization of the full life to come. (Rom 6:11; 8:14-17,23). Christ, in his death, passed out of the rule of the law, and men, sharing his experience, are also free (Rom. 7:4). As the believer stands forth in his new life after this union with Christ, he is necessarily in an entirely

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. 4:10; 5:14; Col. 2:12,13,20; 3:1-4; Phil. 3:10; Gal. 5:24; 6:14;

1 Thess. 4:14; Eph. 2:5,6



new relation to God. God can now look upon him with approval, i.e., justify him, not alone because Christ has done something for him, but because of what he has done with Christ. God can now cancel the past, because man is now lifted out of the realm of that past. If it were not for the new life in him, he might be forgiven the sins of the past, but to what purpose, if it was only to repeat them? Christ not only cancels the past, but assures the future. The death of Christ is significant not so much as one event which accomplished a definite result, but as the culmination of a career of humiliation on earth, a career which involved residence in a flesh body, subjection to the law, and the curse of death, which was the result of sin, and not a natural event. If it had not been for the divine power working in him, this would have been a triumph of sin and death, as it would be in the case of men; but as that divine power saved him and gave him victory, so also the union with him in divine nature saves the believer from that fate (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

The death and resurrection are regarded as a signal triumph over the law because its penalties were the expression of God's condemnation on sin. Behind the law, however, Paul sees the fiendish forces of evil hostile to men which used the law as a means of revealing sin to men and crushing them under its weight. (Col. 2:14,15) Christ's death and resurrection represent a triumph over them because Christ, and men with him, are lifted entirely out of their realm. Death is a terror only as it means the victory of sin--sin had won a triumph through the law (1 Cor. 15:55-57. Rom. 7:8). In supreme confidence in his possession of the Spirit of Christ, Paul exalts in such liberation from all the evils of this world as makes the past seem a condition of abject slavery. (Rom. 6:15f)



This represents the main line of Paul's thought. There are instances in which his statements are determined by charges made against his view of Christianity. In Romans he is writing to a church which he had not founded and which had not necessarily been founded by one of his followers. They may have represented a type of Christianity which had not rejected the law as had Paul. There was also the strong Jewish element which was casting aspersions on Paul's antinomian tendencies, maintaining that it was not just to put on the same level those who kept the law and those who did not keep it; and that Paul's method meant the breaking down of moral standards. Paul replies by saying that the law had not kept the Jews from being in the same class of sinners with the Gentiles (Rom. 2:1f; 3:9,19,20,23). Justice, on a law basis, would condemn all alike. But God's righteousness is shown by his providing the way of faith salvation, through Christ, in which all share alike. His righteousness is better manifested by making it possible for all to be righteous--it is right to pass over previous sins in this case--than by acquitting a few who have kept certain commands and condemning all others. (Rom. 3:21-30)

There was an idea in Jewish circles of the vicarious service of the righteous redounding to the credit of others<sup>1</sup> but as that idea is used by Paul it is not merely that of the death of the innocent Jesus winning a certain standing for man. It is their participation, resulting in the new birth which is important. It is he that has died who is justified from sin (Rom. 6:7); and "ye were justified in the name (baptism) of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of our God". (1 Cor. 6:11)

Since Paul denied the recognized interpretation of the place of the law in the divine plan, he was forced to define its purpose as he saw it.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Baruch 3<sup>2</sup>14<sup>7</sup>; 4 Macc. 6:28; 17:22,23



He never questions its divine origin, though he does put it on a lower plane as mediated by angels instead of being directly given, as was the Promise (Gal. 3:19). Since nothing merely happens with God, the law had a purpose. But the Jews had mistaken it. (1) Its purpose was not to win men's approval before God--that was accomplished through Christ alone. (2) It was not the original plan but secondary and supplementary (Gal. 3:17); and therefore did not replace the promise. (3) Its real purpose was so to increase the sense of sin and guilt and of consequent helplessness, that men in the quest of salvation would be brought to an impasse and, abandoning all hope of human effort, would in an attitude of faith give themselves over to Christ. (Gal. 3:23; Rom. 3:20)

Many Jews in Paul's day were allegorising parts of the law. Paul could not do that, for in that process the validity and authority of the law as law was still recognised, and for him the law in that capacity was displaced by Christ active in the believer.

One of the most striking characterisations of the law and men's relation to it is found in Rom. 7, a chapter which has usually been regarded as the most vivid piece of autobiography in Paul's letters, as an insight into the inner experience of Saul the Pharisee, a man struggling under the burden of his ancestral religion which only <sup>goaded</sup> him to desperation by the revelation of a moral ideal which he was powerless to attain.

We have seen, however, that Paul's Christian experiences were being constantly reflected back into his pre-Christian life. It was inevitable that it should be so, especially since Paul was engaged in a defense of his Christian position, and not in a critical analysis of his past psychology. If the law suffers a degradation in the light of his new experience, it must be remembered that as a new creature in Christ,



he is bound to feel an infinite gulf between himself and that life under the law. Since Paul was not interested in the evolution of thought, what he regards now as the nature of the law must have been evident in its effects then. But that does not prove that it was true at that period.

As was found to be the case in Paul's account of his conversion, there are elements in the description in Chapter 7 which could not have been present in his pre-Christian experience. (1) The conception of sin as inherent in the flesh was foreign to any Jew. Human personality was viewed as a whole, not as distinctly divided as was the case in the Hellenistic world. Paul's conception leaves little room for the exercise of the will as a force in attaining the right life. Even though in some circles in Judaism there was a tendency to trace the origin of sin to Adam or to the evil heart in man, the Jew stoutly maintained man's free will and responsibility for his own actions, and his power, under the law, to attain to right conduct. The Jew viewed righteousness as a matter of conduct, to the Hellenist it was a matter of the inner being. The difference in point of view is thus far from superficial. It goes deep into fundamentals. (2) The Pauline anthropology reflected in the chapter is such as no Jew would have entertained. The sharp contrast between the ψυχικός or man in whom sin is regnant and the πνευματικός (8:1,2) or new man into whom the sin-conquering spirit has entered. The idea of the νόος is brought out here as nowhere else--the redeeming quality of the natural man, the intellectual umpire which pronounces judgment but can do no more. (7:23) He here identifies the real ego with this νόος which approaches, as far as original endowment is concerned, the divine indwelling element in Stoicism or in the Hermetic literature. But the νόος with Paul has



nothing divine in it but belongs to the constitution of man as  $\psi\upsilon\chi\iota\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$ .

It is the  $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\omega\alpha$  which in essence corresponds to the divine substance of these other systems. (3) The Spirit conception itself was distinctly a product of Paul's Hellenistic environment (7:6<sup>b</sup>, 25; 8:2).

The question arises, however, as to whether Paul, even granted that in his pre-Christian state he would not have interpreted his experience in these terms, might not have had essentially the same ordeal of inner struggle, of a sense of a gulf between the ideal of the law and his own attainment, and so have come to feel his religion as an intolerable weight from which he gladly escaped to Christianity. But the evidence of the Jew's experience with the law and Paul's testimony as to his own pre-Christian life are against such a conclusion. He states definitely that he was, in the religion of the law, blameless and devoted to his ancestral traditions. (Phil. 3:5,6; Gal. 1:14) These statements are distinctly biographical, while Rom. 7 is a general picture of the state of a non-Christian man as conceived by a Christian. In fact it is, in a sense, a racial rather than an individual experience.

There is no sufficiently good ground for believing that Paul, as a pre-Christian Jew, had a radically different experience with the law from that which a multitude of pious, devoted Jews testify to. No Jew would ever have recognised such a picture as Paul here depicts. It has long been customary to represent the religion of legalism as a strait jacket in which men's spirits were confined, a system of oppressive enactments, a religion in which God was a ruthless judge in whom mercy and forgiveness had small

When our attention has been made for the pre-Jewish point of view in such books as S. Schuchter's *Aspects of Jewish Mysticism* and C. S. Montefiore's *Judaism and the Christian Church*, and for some extreme statements in Harnack's *Christianity*, it remains true that we have here a much needed emphasis as ever against the representations of Judaism given by Schuchter and others.



place. But such a view is no longer tenable.<sup>1</sup> The Jew recognized the law as the supreme witness of God's love and favor. Far from being a burden, it was the joy of his life. He did not regard it as a contract system in which forgiveness was excluded. Nor was Torah merely a set of commands, but included God's whole revelation of Himself in the scriptures. Many Hellenistic Jews who found it impossible to observe all the ceremonial requirements allegorized parts of the law, but they recognized it, as a whole, and gloried in it. A vital inner experience with God was not excluded under the law, as many psalms and Pharasaic and rabbinic writings bear witness.

For Paul, however, the law can no longer occupy a central position. His opponents have forced the issue between Christ and the law as a means of righteousness and Paul in no uncertain terms meets that issue. Since Christ is the end, the law is secondary in God's plan and must be regarded as contributing to the eventual triumph of Christ. (Gal. 3:23) Viewing the law as a system of commands and prohibitions, he conceives it as preliminary to Christ's work in its capacity of defining sin (Rom. 7:13) and therefore of rousing a latent sense of responsibility and guilt (7:7-10). The law intensified the problem of existence, but offered no solution, and therefore left man in a condition from which only Christ could release him (7:24,25). It was not strange that Paul's argument was open to the charge of making the law an accomplice of sin (7:7,13). Paul, however, vehemently maintains that the law is spiritual and divine, and that it is sin, seizing

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<sup>1</sup>When due allowance has been made for the pro-Jewish point of view in such books as S. Schechter's Agendas of Rabbinic Theology and C. G. Montefiore's Synoptic Gospels, and for some extreme statements in Herford's Pharisaism, it remains true that we have here a much needed emphasis as ever against the representations of Judaism given by Schürer and others.



an opportunity through the law, that is to blame for the fresh impulse to sin (7:7-12); that the law reveals sin in all its hideousness (7:13); that the high ideal of the law is in fact fulfilled in the Christian life (Rom. 3:31). Rom. 7 is then, in reality, a picture, in miniature, of the universe, a helpless prey to forces of evil, which attains to salvation and comes to its highest realization only through a re-creation in the divine nature. The present: that he had in himself an experience

If Paul had felt the law to be the intolerable burden that it is claimed it was, he would have cast it utterly aside. As it is, he feels himself loyal to it, he regards it as one of the evidences of God's special dealings with His people, but he is able to see it in its right relation to God's plan. As a barrier reared by the Jews between them and the Gentiles it is done away (Col. 2:14,15); as the supreme revelation leading to righteousness it is superseded by the revelation of Christ, but the law in itself he feels to be stamped with divine sanction and to be realized in essence in the new era.

Paul had no idea of historical evolution--no conception of a progress of the race from lower to higher ideals through the development of inherent possibilities. It was impossible for the age in which he lived, and especially impossible to one who held Paul's conception of humanity. History represented certain steps in the divine dealings with the world, but not progressive stages in humanity's approach to a divine ideal.

In estimating the vitality and worth of Paul's religious experience, the norm must not be the ideal of a later age. Each individual's validity for history must be gauged primarily for that of the age in which he lives. The fact that the Christ mysticism which was the basis of Paul's



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religious experience has not functioning power in a later time, does not invalidate his own experience. That Paul was a keenly religious individual, in vital touch with the religious needs of society in his own time; that he labored with untiring energy and undaunted purpose to realize as working values in that society certain great religious ideas; that he dared to break with the past because he believed that God was creatively at work in the present; that he had in himself an experience with God which was none the less vital because it developed in the midst of circles of ideas peculiar to his day and was largely shaped by them--these facts make Paul a marked figure for any age in which there is the supreme need of recreating spiritual values to minister to the salvation of successive generations.

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